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COACHING ROADS  
OF OLD NEW ENGLAND



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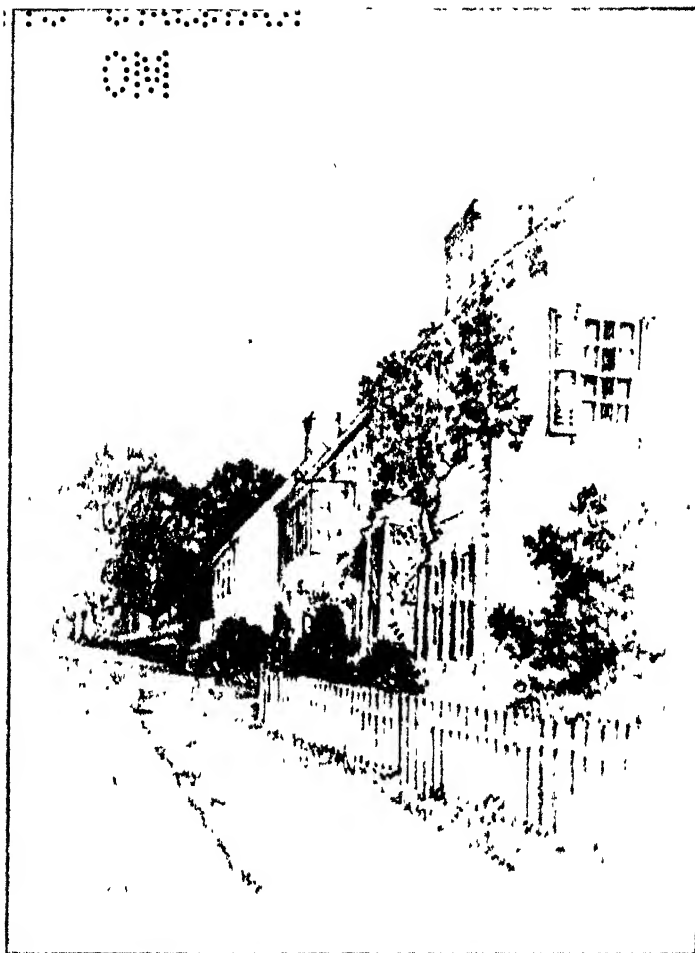
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TORONTO





*The Blue Anchor, Newbury*

# COACHING ROADS OF OLD NEW ENGLAND

*Their Inns and Taverns and Their Stories*

By

GEORGE FRANCIS MARLOWE

ILLUSTRATED WITH DRAWINGS  
BY THE AUTHOR



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY • NEW YORK

1945

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*First Printing*

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When first Imagination fills the Mind,  
And Hope delusive leaves slow doubt behind,  
The eager Tourist hastens to begin  
His fancied Journey to a pleasant Inn;  
Where many a Traveller in days of old  
Has trod good Roads, and good Adventures told:

    The Prospects fine and the Horizon gay  
Speaks lucky Weather; and a prosp'rous day;  
Till at the close of Eve, benumb'd, bemired,  
Himself wet thro', and Rosinante tired,  
At a cold Inn, without a pitying Friend,  
Obliged to tarry and his cash to spend,  
Repentance comes on fast;—and far from home,  
He strangely wonders what could make him roam.

JOHN BYNG, FIFTH VISCOUNT TORRINGTON

*Composed at an inn, 1781*





## *Acknowledgments*

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I AM UNDER obligation to the authors and publishers of the numerous town and other histories mentioned in the list of references. If any have been omitted I offer them my profound apologies. I am particularly indebted to Mrs. Alice Morse Earle's "Stage-Coach and Tavern Days" (The Macmillan Company), Mary Caroline Crawford's "Little Pilgrimage Among Old New England Inns" (L. C. Page and Company), and the Reverend John Van Schaick Jr.'s "Characters in Tales of a Wayside Inn" (The Universalist Publishing House). I also owe thanks to L. C. Page and Company for permission to use drawings made from photographs of the Hancock and Bull Dog taverns and the Stavers Inn, in Miss Crawford's book.

G. F. M.

FRAMINGHAM CENTRE

July, 1944



## *Foreword*

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IN NO WAY, perhaps, could the visitor who would explore New England do better than to travel the routes of some of the old coaching roads. To follow the Groton road by Keene and Hanover and northward, is to journey through much of the charming hill and lake country of southern New Hampshire into the upper Connecticut valley and the foothills of the Green and the White Mountains. By either the Upper or the Middle Post Road he would traverse some of the most delightful of New England farming country: by the Middle Road, crossing the long ridges of the rolling hills alternating with fertile valleys in the neighborhood of Woodstock and Pomfret in Connecticut. The northerly route of the Newburyport Turnpike will lead him over the Lynn marshes by historic Salem and through the delightful, though more level open country stretching away to the Ipswich dunes and the sea, through old Newbury, to those two most charming of New England seaport towns, Newburyport and Portsmouth. And lastly, if he follow the old Boston and New York Post Road by way of Providence he will pass through Newport and the historic towns bordering on Long Island Sound, Old Lyme and Guilford and Fairfield, on the way to New York.

Some of the old coaching inns and taverns have been spared to us. Once every town and village along the road had one or

## Foreword

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more, and often one was to be found in the smallest hamlet and even at lonely crossroads with never another house in sight. On one of the turnpikes there were said to have been sixty-five inns or taverns in sixty miles.

In visiting some of those which are left, it may be of interest to recall a little of the past of those others which once we would have found, but which are to be found no longer.

In this last quarter-century many of these old wayside houses have disappeared. Some have succumbed to fire; the march of progress—street widening and other “improvements”—has been responsible for the disappearance of others. Fortunately, of recent years a more general appreciation of the architecture and historic associations of the past to some extent has aroused public sentiment and interest, and a number of them have been saved from destruction, though in many cases some of their picturesque aspect due to their old-time setting along the highways has been impaired. But in setting out on this, our imaginary journey over the old coaching roads of New England, whether on horseback, in the lumbering “stage-wagons” of early days, or in that climax of perfection of the coach builder’s art, the Concord coach, we shall confine ourselves to no particular time, traveling perhaps with loyalist subjects of King George, with patriotic citizens of the Revolutionary years, or later officers of the new republic; trying to give the reader occasional glimpses of the life of the times in the various towns and villages on the route, and of such characters as we may encounter along the way as happen to interest us.

# Contents

---

	PAGE
<i>Foreword</i>	xi
I <i>The Old Boston Post Road</i>	I
The first post—At the Lion in Marlborough Street—Tory Row—A distinguished governor and his country seat—The Red Horse Tavern, most famous of them all—Sanctuary for a distressed duke.	
II <i>The Old Boston Post Road (continued)</i>	31
An early stage driver—Father of the Turnpike—A hill-top village—An ingenious horse thief—An Indian at the court of Charles X.	
III <i>The Middle Road</i>	51
A convivial occasion—New England Dick Turpin—A Connecticut royalist and his manor farm—Scene of a famous exploit—An officious tithingman.	
IV <i>The Lower Post Road</i>	78
H.M.S. <i>Gaspee</i> , a night attack—Murder at the tavern and a crossroads gibbet—An elopement—Old Lyme—Refuge of the regicides.	
V <i>The Lower Post Road (continued)</i>	101
A dark night and a shingly beach—Perils of the road—An early Boston schoolmistress—A roadhouse of old New York—A bachelor landlord who never owned a hat.	
	xiii

## Contents

---

	PAGE
VI <i>The Groton, Keene, and Hanover Road</i>	122
A "refreshing" execution at Cambridge—Revolutionary powder house—Where Billy Dawes lost and found his watch—A Groton mill and an Indian tragedy—Jaffrey and the Grand Monadnock.	
VII <i>The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road</i>	159
The Portsmouth Flying Stage-Coach to Mr. Stavers' inn—Old Salem—Newbury and Newburyport—An English farm and a Devon tavern in New England—Portsmouth and two rival inns.	
<i>References</i>	199

## *Illustrations*

---

<i>The Blue Anchor, Newbury</i>	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	<i>Page</i>
<i>The Hancock Tavern, Corn Court, Boston (No longer standing)</i>	5
<i>Wayland Bridge, Sudbury River</i>	11
<i>Wayland Meadows</i>	15
<i>The Wayside Inn, South Sudbury</i>	19
<i>Stable Yard, Williams Tavern, Marlborough, Mass.</i>	25
<i>Fairbanks House, Dedham</i>	53
<i>Mendon Church</i>	61
<i>Bowen Tavern, Woodstock, Conn.: The Hall (The house is now the home of Dr. Hamilton Holt)</i>	65
<i>Country Store, Abington, Conn.</i>	69
<i>Putnam Elms, Brooklyn, Conn.</i>	73
<i>The Bull Dog, Providence</i>	81
<i>Starr House, 1665, Guilford, Conn.</i>	93
<i>An English Inn (Courtyard of the Noel Arms, Chipping Campden)</i>	97
<i>Morris Cove Light, New Haven, Conn.</i>	103
<i>Old Houses on the Post Road, Bronxdale, 1903 (Now demolished)</i>	115
	xv



## Illustrations

---

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Old Powder House, Somerville, Mass. (As it looked about 1900)</i>	125
<i>Groton Inn, Groton, Mass.</i>	131
<i>Old Buildings on the Concord River</i>	135
<i>Fitzwilliam Church</i>	141
<i>A New Hampshire Road</i>	145
<i>Monadnock</i>	149
<i>Grafton, from the Hill</i>	153
<i>Grafton Village</i>	157
<i>The Old Whipple House, Ipswich</i>	165
<i>The Blue Anchor, Newbury</i>	173
<i>A Newburyport Street</i>	181
<i>"Mr. Stavers' Inn," The Earl of Halifax, at Portsmouth (Later called the Pitt Tavern; from a photograph about 1907)</i>	185
<i>Jacob Wendell House, Pleasant Street, Portsmouth</i>	189
<i>Portsmouth and Old St. John's Church</i>	193

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COACHING ROADS  
OF OLD NEW ENGLAND

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I

*The Old Boston Post Road*

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As ancient is this hostelry  
As any in the land may be,  
Built in the old Colonial day,  
When men lived in a grander way,  
With ampler hospitality.

A region of repose it seems,  
A place of slumber and of dreams,  
Remote among the wooded hills!

*Tales of a Wayside Inn*

IN THE latter part of January of the year 1673, a lonely man on horseback was following an old Indian trail through the woods somewhere between Harlem and the site of the present city of New Haven, not far from the shore of Long Island Sound. Much of the way was through unbroken forest and was poorly marked, though occasionally there were rough cart-roads through the sparsely settled villages along the Sound. On these short winter days, making his way through drifted snow and often guided only by blazes on the trees, he would have made scarcely more than fifteen miles a day, stopping for the night at some rude village tavern, and it was not until two weeks from the time he had left the fort at the lower end of New York that he rode over Roxbury Neck into Boston.

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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The man was Governor Lovelace's post-rider. In his saddlebags he carried the first regular mail between New York and Boston, going over the route which later was to become the great road of the stagecoaches.

The day's journey of the later post-riders was from thirty to fifty miles in summer; but in winter it was much less. Though they rode "post hast for His Majesties special service," they probably sometimes felt such speed was uncalled for, and one rider is said to have whiled away the tedium of the trip by knitting as he rode.

The first trip between New York and Boston by a public conveyance for passengers, described as a stagecoach, is believed to have been on the 25th of June, 1772.

There is something of romance which still clings to the famous highways of the past, and their roadside inns and taverns. "For my part," wrote Robert Louis Stevenson, "I like a story to begin with an old wayside inn, where, 'towards the close of the year 17—,' several gentlemen in three-cocked hats were playing bowls. . . . Give me a highwayman and I was full to the brim; a Jacobite would do, but the highwayman was my favorite dish. I can still hear that merry clatter of hoofs along the moonlit lane; night and the coming of day are still related in my mind with the doings of John Rann or Jerry Abershaw. . . ."

Though we had no Dick Turpins nor even a Jerry Abershaw, who no doubt could pocket a gentleman's watch or lift a lady's purse with all the elegance and courtesy of some exquisite

## The Old Boston Post Road

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offering a snuffbox or handing the lady her fan, our roads and their wayside inns and taverns were not entirely devoid of adventure.

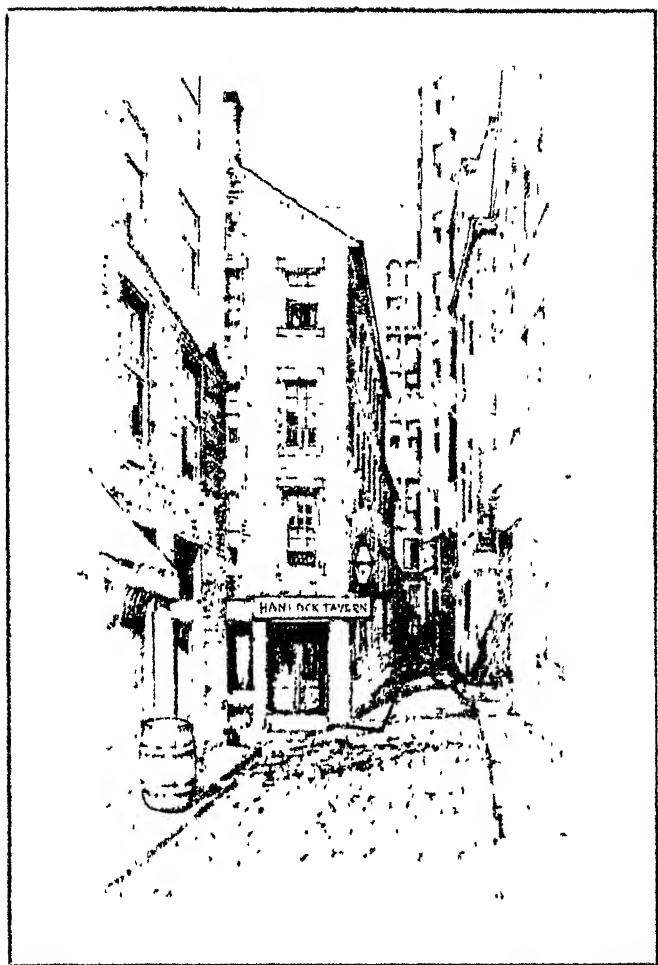
Let us start over the Old Boston Post Road—the Upper Road, as it was called—one of the very earliest of the post roads. Probably we would have found the stage, in early days driven by no less a person than that pioneer of stage drivers, Levi Pease himself, at the sign of the Lion in Marlborough Street—now Washington. Here, on the site of Keith's Theater, the Lion and the Lamb apparently lay down together, for the Lamb Tavern was on the site of the old Adams House near by—historic sites for both theater and tavern, as an early Adams House succeeded the Lamb. Not far away, at the corner of Orange and Essex streets, called Shaving Corner, was Peggy Moor's, favorite resort with farmers who came in to market from Roxbury by way of the Neck. And if you will walk down the lower end of Boylston Street today, once Frog Lane, past the Touraine, you will see facing you, on the opposite side of Washington Street, on the upper story of an old building, a tablet with an elm tree on it in bas-relief—for here for over a hundred years, until 1833, stood the Liberty Tree Tavern, and the Liberty Tree itself, where one warm night in August, 1765, the Sons of Liberty hanged in effigy the King's stamp agent Andrew Oliver. Just opposite, for over a hundred and fifty years, was a market, for it was only in 1888 that the old Boylston Market, with its famous concert hall above, was converted into stores and offices.

But we have already lingered here too long. Pease started

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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at five o'clock in the morning, and, riding with him, we probably would have had no breakfast until we reached Watertown. Except for an early farmer's boy or the milkman on his rounds, Washington—no, Marlborough Street then—and Cornhill would not be crowded at that hour, and Pease, unless he was unlike other drivers of the time, would be letting his horses out a bit. Past the site of Governor Hutchinson's house where later stood the Old Corner Book Store, with Governor Winthrop's opposite, at the old State House he would have turned up Queen Street hill (Court Street) through Bowdoin Square and past the foot of Lynde Street, where later the elegant Mr. Harrison Gray Otis built his house by the (then) new West Church. And so we would have been off, soon rattling over the planks of the old West Boston Bridge. It was there that Longfellow stood at midnight. Perhaps he was waiting for the coach, for he tells us that on his first visit to the Wayside Inn, otherwise Howe's Tavern at Sudbury, the stage left Boston at three o'clock in the morning, reaching the tavern for breakfast, "a considerable portion of the route being travelled in total darkness, and without your having the least idea who your companion might be." At Cambridge, just before the square was reached, we would have recognized the Wadsworth house, the old home of the college presidents. Here, in later years, we might have found President Kirkland, described as a man "of middling stature, and portly, with a round and comely face and regular and beautiful teeth," in which last, in a day of somewhat primitive dentistry, we would consider him



*The Hancock Tavern, Corn Court, Boston (No longer standing)*





## The Old Boston Post Road

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particularly fortunate. Though said to have been by nature indolent, "he was of rare abilities, and in conversation brilliant."

President Willard occupied the house when Washington made a passing visit here in 1789. Willard was one of the last to cling to the full-bottomed white periwig—in his study exchanged for the velvet skullcap of Stuart and Copley portraits of Boston worthies of the time. Knee breeches were worn by a few of the elder members of the faculty as late as 1825, though discarded by the students a quarter of a century earlier, the rules requiring them to wear coats of a blue-gray cloth when without their gowns. Writing fifty years or more ago, Drake says, "Little does your spruce young undergraduate of today resemble his predecessors who went . . . attired in summer in a loose, long gown of calico or gingham, varied in winter . . . by woollen stuff called lamb-skin." Dr. Joseph Allen of Medfield, graduating in 1811, wore a black coat and smallclothes, black silk stockings tied at the knee with black ribbon, all of which are said to have been made at home, as well as his ruffled shirt. His shoes were made by the town shoemaker. Two colored servants walked in from Medfield to serve at his spread.

It was President Willard who used to gather a club of gentlemen at his house on certain evenings, among them Judge Dana, Governor Gerry, and Mr. Craigie, with some of the college professors. Bachelors were excluded, and Judge Winthrop, then lately librarian of the college, who was unable

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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to qualify, is reported to have said that they probably met to talk over their grievances. To Wadsworth House in earlier years came royal governors, and it is said that no distinguished traveller passed the door without stopping to pay his respects.

Fortunately the old house still stands facing the never-ending stream of modern traffic past the college. It is little changed in appearance, though the street widening of many years ago sheared away front walk and all vestiges of lawn, and the doorstep gives directly upon the sidewalk. But Wadsworth, Holyoke, and other early presidents probably would find themselves more at home among the newer buildings of Georgian brick with their many-lighted sashes than at most American colleges of today.

Christ Church stands in its burying ground facing the common, and beyond, in Brattle Street, are the houses of Tory Row, where in Royalist days lived the Brattles and the Vassalls, the Olivers and the Lechemeres and the Sewalls. Some of the old houses are still standing. "Never had I chanced upon such an agreeable situation," wrote Madame Riedesel who occupied the Sewall-Lechemere house during Burgoyne's stay in this vicinity. "Seven families, who were connected with each other partly by relationship and partly by affection, had here farms, gardens, and magnificent houses, and, not far off, plantations of fruit. The owners of these were in the habit of meeting each other in the afternoons, now in the house of one, now at another, and making themselves merry with music and the dance, living in prosperity, content and happy, until, alas!

## The Old Boston Post Road

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this ruinous war severed them, and left their houses desolate except two, the proprietors of which were soon obliged to flee." Longfellow first roomed in the Vassall house in 1837, buying it after Mrs. Craigie's death. Washington had preferred it to the Wadsworth house, which had been suggested for headquarters, and after the Revolution the fine old house had a number of noted occupants before Longfellow bought it.

But we must hurry on if we are to make our first stage and pass the night in Shrewsbury. At Watertown there were a number of taverns in Revolutionary days. Richardson's, at the corner of Belmont Street, standing until about thirty years ago, was a favorite resort for some of Burgoyne's officers, no doubt on account of its cockpit on the opposite side of the road. Colonel Jonathan Brewer, who had come to Watertown from Framingham, kept a tavern on the Weston road, the scene of one of the adventures of the British spies of whom we shall hear farther on. These old inns are gone, but we should stop and see the Abraham Brown house on Main Street, a restored seventeenth century house belonging to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

Between Watertown and Waltham we must turn aside on Gore Street to see Governor Gore's house, the most stately and impressive of any of the remaining older houses of New England, and one of the few great houses of the period.

In 1804 Christopher Gore had served on the reparations commission to determine the amount of damages due our citizens from the British government, when he succeeded in securing

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

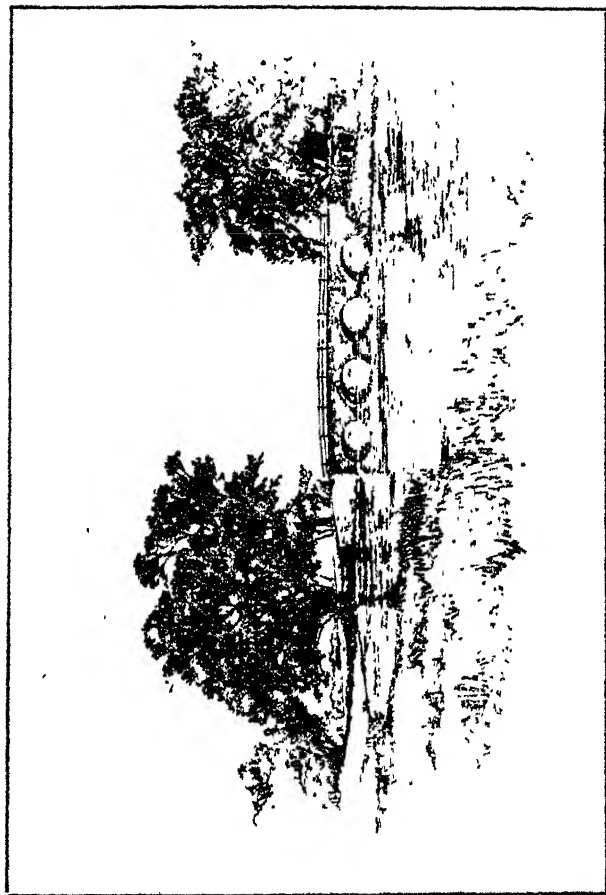
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several million dollars for American merchants for claims arising out of the Revolution. On his return he found only the ruins of his wooden house, burnt to the ground five years before. But he had brought with him, it is said, plans for the present splendid mansion.

Though of extreme simplicity of detail, the house is of great dignity and elegance, with a number of fine rooms—particularly the state reception hall and the beautiful oval room, the central feature. Here, in the brilliant glow of candlelight from chandeliers and sconces, must have been the scene of many a ball or other function, and in the state dining room many a grand dinner, presided over by the gracious host and his lady, when toasts were drunk to the newly elected president or the senator from Massachusetts.

A pioneer in manufacturing in America, and an able lawyer, Gore served as representative to the General Court, governor, and United States senator. He was an officer or member of various learned societies, and a fellow and overseer of Harvard College. And here, in the midst of his park of eighty acres with its fallow deer, he lived for nearly twenty years the life of a country gentleman.

In later years the place passed through many vicissitudes, became the Waltham Country Club, and one of its state rooms was the bedroom of a well-known pugilist. At last the fine old house with its park came up for sale. The house was to be torn down and the land cut up for building lots, when almost overnight various members of three public-spirited societies stepped



*Wayland Bridge, Sudbury River*



## The Old Boston Post Road

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in, money was raised to take up the mortgage, and the estate was saved for all time. It is now held by the Gore Place Society and is open to the public for a small fee. The house has been provided with appropriate furniture, a few pieces being a part of the original furnishings, and there are fine portraits of the Governor and two of Mrs. Gore. There are also the old stable and coach house, in the style of the house, a farm cottage and the deer house. It is all historic ground, part of the Beaver Brook Plowlands, granted to Sir Richard Saltonstall and other early settlers, later passing to ancestors of President Garfield.

In Weston the Theodore Jones tavern still stands by the roadside, a fine old house fortunately still retaining its original many-paned windows. Just beyond the center of the town, on the same side of the road, is the Golden Ball, a noted Tory house, resort of British officers before the Revolution. This was kept by another Jones—Lieutenant or Captain Elisha of that name. Here, one day early in April, 1775, came three mysterious unknown men, dressed like farmers. Jones had come across one of them "looking for flagroot," as he said. Somehow he discovered that they were of similar political views, and took them all to the Ball for dinner. Hardly had they sat down, however, when a crowd began to gather outside. It seems that one had stopped at the Joel Smith tavern down the road, where he had gone to the stableyard asking for work. Here he had aroused suspicion, and had been followed to the Ball. Jones's colored servant got them off to the house of another Royalist in a distant part of the town, where they spent the night. Meanwhile, thirty



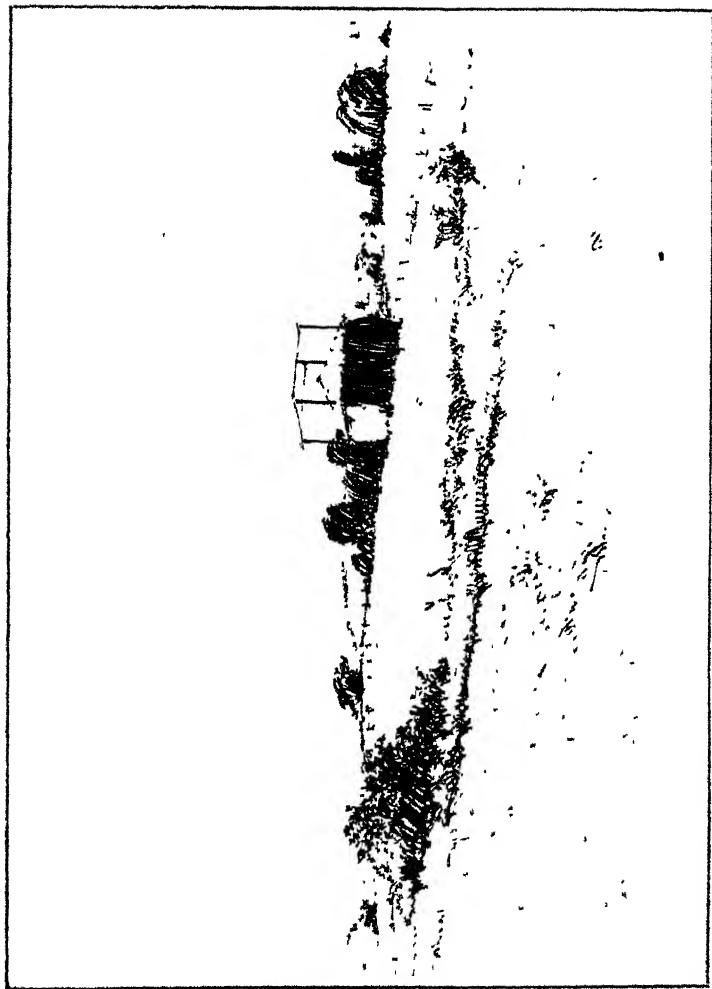
## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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men searched the Ball from cellar to attic, drinking a barrel of rum supplied by the landlord. Earlier in the day the three men had stopped at Brown's tavern at Watertown, which place one of them described as "a pretty large town for America." Here they had been served by a "black woman" at dinner, for which they settled a bill for two shillings odd, but presently the woman seems to have become suspicious. Some of her remarks were disconcerting, and they decided not to spend the night as they had intended, but pushed on to Weston. We shall hear more of these gentlemen later on.

But of all America's old inns and taverns, the Wayside Inn at South Sudbury is probably the most famous; for what Washington Irving did for the Red Lion at Stratford, Longfellow did for the Red Horse Tavern at Sudbury.

For four generations, covering a period of a hundred and sixty years, the tavern was kept by the Howes; but the railroads made it no longer profitable, and for nearly forty years it ceased to be a public house. When with the coming of the automobile the public took to the road again, it was reopened. It was in the time of the second Howe, Colonel Ezekiel, that the sign of the red horse was hung out. Henry Ford, who now owns the place and some hundreds of acres in the vicinity, has added a wing at the rear. If this is not quite in the character of the rest of the house, it evidently gives satisfaction to the hundreds of tourists and other visitors who enjoy a meal here amid the historic and romantic surroundings of the famous old inn. The furniture is appropriate and mostly old, and a number of objects of interest



*Wayland Meadows*



## The Old Boston Post Road

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associated with the tavern have been collected. Here Mr. Ford occasionally comes and has entertained President Coolidge, Thomas Edison, and other friends.

Opposite is the reconstructed old coach house in which are various ancient vehicles of the road. Nearby is a reproduction of an old mill with overshot wheel, and, latest addition to the community, the little white country church.

Of all the characters of the "Tales," the Musician, Ole Bull, was probably the best known to the public, though he was never at the Inn. As late as the eighties and nineties of the last century, his widow in her little open carriage drawn by two small ponies was a familiar sight in the streets of Cambridge. She was a sister of Longfellow's son-in-law, J. G. Thorp.

The real musician of the Inn was a farm hand whom they invited in to make things lively, when "on cool autumnal nights the Inn family used to gather about the old fireplace, when they would roast apples and pop corn, tell stories or listen to the fiddling of a farm hand"; and here, in recent years, Henry Ford brought his protégé, the old fiddler, famous a few years ago for his playing of country jigs and reels. The Spanish Jew, Edrehi, also was never at the Inn.

Treadwell, the Theologian, really was not a theologian at all, but an inventor and all-around Yankee genius with a knowledge of physics, who finally became Rumford Professor of Physics at Harvard and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Born on an Ipswich farm, the son of an Ipswich sea captain, he invented the Treadwell power press, used by the

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

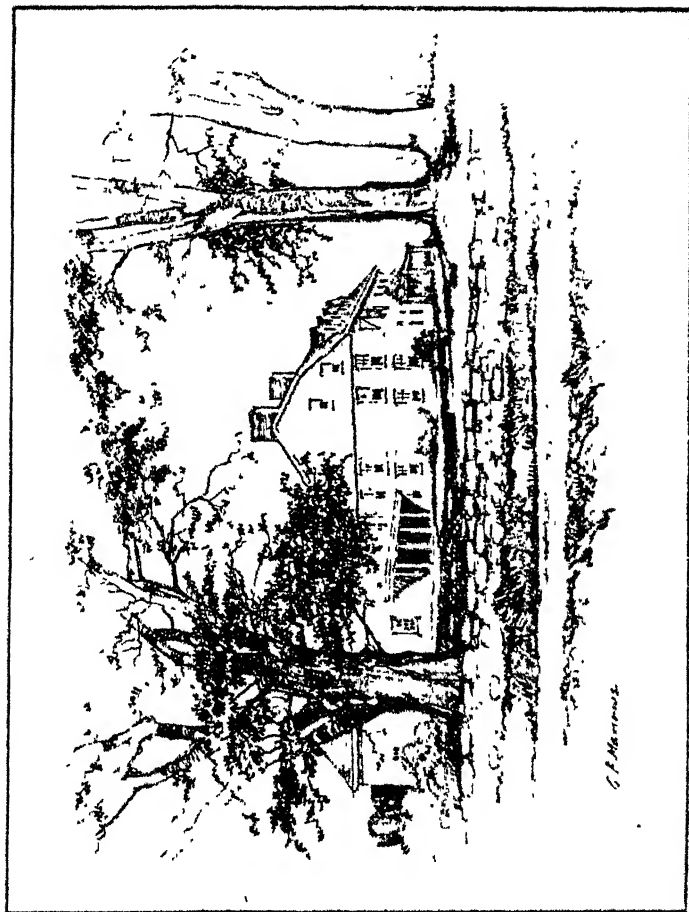
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Boston *Advertiser*, a hemp-spinning machine for the manufacture of cordage, and the gun long known as the Parrott gun (Parrott, he claimed, having appropriated his ideas). When, in 1829, at the age of thirty-eight, he sold out his machinery business, he was able to retire with a fortune of \$70,000. Treadwell is said to have been the one among the characters of the Tales who first discovered the Inn.

Of the Student, Henry Ware Wales, little seems to be known, though he left his library to Harvard College and a legacy of \$40,000 to endow a professorship of Sanskrit.

The last survivor of the seven characters was the young Sicilian, Luigi Monti, most charming and appealing in personality perhaps of all the characters of the "Tales." After serving in the revolutionary army of 1848-1849 against the Bourbons, he came as an exile to the United States in 1850, teaching Italian and Spanish at Harvard. Later he returned to Sicily, where for twelve years he was consul at Palermo. Monti lived on almost to see the outbreak of the First World War, dying in Italy on the 3rd of March, 1914, at the age of eighty-four. So he who first saw the light between the tawny headlands of the Gulf of Palermo, "was fortunate enough to end his days in his beloved Italy, and to sleep under the waving pines in the Roman Cemetery."

It is said that Longfellow himself visited the Inn only twice, and then his visits were short: once in his student days on his way to New York to sail for Europe, and once, years later, with his friend James T. Fields.



*The Wayside Inn, South Sudbury*



## The Old Boston Post Road

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After the death of Lyman Howe and the closing of the Inn, Parsons, the Poet of the Tales, went for a time to Wayland, at Heards Island, as the place seems to have been called then, among the hills and meadows through which we have just passed. He wrote to his sister: "The white hills are brilliant in the magnificent March sun, and amid the dazzling meadows and fields obliterated again by the freshly fallen snow, the welcome novelty of the blue Sudbury stream which has been so long black with ice. But when the wintry glory is gone and the snow vanished, . . . June brings the costume that you and I love better than icicles and leafless boughs. . . ."

In a little diary and account book kept by Lyman Howe, now in the possession of an old Sudbury family, under date of 1853 we find: "Professor Treadwell came up to board with me, Saturday July 9th before supper, accompanied by his Lady, and with a horse and carriage he staid with me til tues, July 12th after breakfast, when he went to Cambridge with his horse. He came again Thursday July 14th before dinner & staid with me till July 18th after dinner when he went down. Came up again thursday July 28th & staid till august 1st mon after dinner & then went down as usual to Cambridge all the above times with his horse." There are many subsequent similar entries up to September 26th, and on the following page, "Mrs. Addie Treadwell came up to board with me till Sept. 26th (Monday) . . ."

On August 6th we find the first entry of "Mr. Lewis Monti," who stayed until September 9th; and the following year, on the



## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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1st of July, Dr. William Parsons "went down" with Mr. Treadwell on the 5th, on the 8th returning with Monti; and during that summer they all seem to have been frequent visitors. Monti stayed for six weeks, his bill being \$26.75.

In 1853 "Dr. Ware & lady" and Dr. Henry Wales and his nephew came with two horses.

Interspersed between these records of the coming and going of guests are accounts with neighboring farmers for pasturing cattle, and other business of the farm. At one time there were forty-eight head of cattle, including thirty-six oxen. There also was more or less horse trading. In December, 1857, the Landlord paid \$1.00 for "good rough spirit," among other items of drinkables bought from Buckley Parmenter. During Dr. George Park's visit in August, 1853, Howe sold him "a half thousand cigars," for which the Doctor paid \$9.00. At the bottom of the account, when he left, he noted, "Square as a brick."

Howe was much interested in astronomy and owned a small telescope. When successive housekeepers tried his patience, as they evidently often did (he never married), he would seek rest and forgetfulness in the skies; and in 1854 we find notes of the position of the comet of that year in March, and records of his own quite precise observations on the evening of the 3rd of April. On the 15th he wrote: "In morn found the earth covered with snow & it snowed nearly all day (a poor family from Troy N.Y. going to Strafford N.H. staid here the night of ap 14, '54, by name Daniel gray,) fair weather but cold enough so that snow did not leave 17th snowed again & snow

## The Old Boston Post Road

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covered the ground pretty much til April 19th. . . . N.B. decent sleighing Ap 19 in A.M."

When the Post Road was rebuilt several years ago, this section near the Inn was straightened, leaving the old house in a sort of sequestered backwater, and although some of the great oaks have at last succumbed to the ravages of time and the elements, the place still retains much of the charm of its old-time setting. It is not difficult to conjure up those scenes of bygone days when it was an important place on the busy highway; in times of the French and Indian Wars a halting place for troops on the way west and to Canada, and upcountry marketers with great canvas-topped wagons; teamsters with their ox wagons and yokes of slowly plodding steers stopped before the door or put up their teams for the night in the stable yard, while housemaids and hostlers came running to prepare refreshment for man and beast.

From the Inn to Marlborough the way is through a pleasant farming country. At the foot of the hill going out of town towards Northborough we shall see the John Brown bell, brought from Harpers Ferry by veterans of the Civil War, and now hanging from the upper story of a red brick building in the main street. On West Main Street is the old Gibbon house, built in 1740 as the parsonage of the Reverend Aaron Smith. Mr. Gibbon had a little store near his house, and one day Sock Moores, something of a town character, came into the store with a large bottle and called for a quart of rum. It was one of those bottles which used to have the bottom driven up through

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

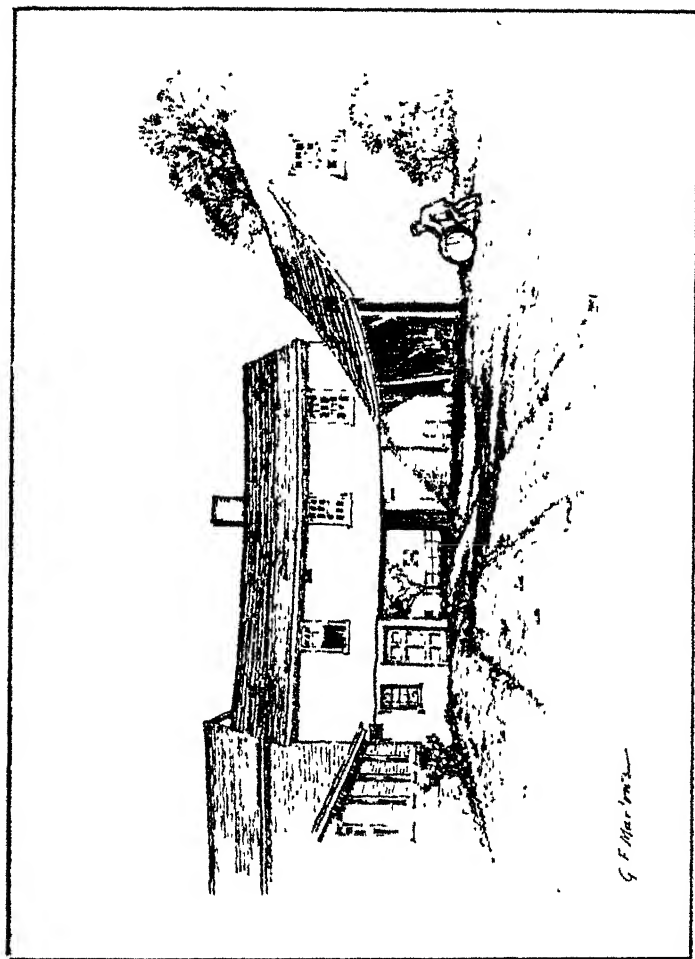
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the center, and Gibbon at once exclaimed, "Why, Sock, this bottle won't hold a quart." "Well now, Sam, 'twill. If it won't, I'll pay for it. If it will, you shall make no charge." When the bottle was filled, a gill or more was left in the measure. Sock took the bottle and, driving in the cork, turned it over and told Gibbon to pour the rest of the quart into the bottom. There was room and to spare, and Sock went off with the rum.

At the right angle in the road, facing the pond, is the old Williams Tavern, now deserted and long altered in appearance beyond recognition. The original house was built by Abraham Williams about 1662. Here Captain Hutchinson was brought, mortally wounded by the Indians in the fight at Brookfield, the first burial in the old churchyard. This house, burnt by the Indians during King Philip's War, was rebuilt the following year on the same site, though it is thought little or nothing earlier than 1820 now remains. In the coaching era the tavern was a relay house for Levi Pease, of whom we have already heard, and one of the principal stopping places for his first line of mail coaches between Boston and New York, in 1786. Here court was held in early days, and not long ago it was said that the prisoners' cells could still be seen in the basement.

Washington had his dinner in the house on the 23rd of October, 1789, when he was entertained by the dignitaries of the town. Earlier, the Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt stayed for five days, having been taken ill on the road; and he afterwards wrote of the kindness and care of his hosts.

François Alexandre Frédéric, Duc de La Rochefoucauld-



*Stable Yard, Williams Tavern, Marlborough, Mass.*



Liancourt, had escaped to England after the sack of the Tuileries and the fall of Louis XVI in 1792. From England he came to America, probably largely on account of his interest in the liberal and democratic institutions of the new republic; for in France, in an age when little thought had been given to the care and education of the poor and less fortunate members of society, La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt founded a school of arts and crafts for the sons of soldiers, and later was an active member of the administrative boards of various hospitals and prisons, writing upon the English system of taxation, poor relief, and education. He was one of the first promoters of vaccination in France. Son of the Duc d'Estissac, he was married at seventeen, entering the army as an officer of carbineers. At Liancourt he had a model farm stocked with English cattle. On Bonaparte's coup d'état he returned to France in 1799, and became a member of the House of Peers. His family was one of great prominence and wealth under the old regime in France.

Such was the stranger who, sometime about a hundred and fifty years ago, spent five days at the Williams Tavern. Knowing something of his character, it is perhaps easy to understand why he was kindly received and well cared for in his illness by his New England hosts. "Although excessively ill, I was sensible of my dreadful situation, being laid there on a bed of sickness, among people who had never seen me before, and this idea threw me into great agitation of mind which bordered on despair. But, fortunately, the family at whose house I had stopped were the best people in the world. Both men and

women took as much care of me as if I had been their own child. I must repeat it once more, that I cannot bestow too much praise on the kindness of this excellent people. Being a stranger, utterly unacquainted with them, sick, and appearing in the garb of mediocrity, bordering on indigence, I possessed not the least claim on the hospitality of this respectable family, but such as their own kindness and humanity could suggest. And yet during the five days I continued in their house, they neglected their own business to nurse me with the tenderest care and with unwearied solicitude. They heightened still more the generosity of their conduct by making up their account in a manner so extremely reasonable that three times the amount would not have been too much for the trouble I had caused them."

One of La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt's sons married a Santo Domingo heiress related to the Beauharnais family, his wife becoming a *dame d'honneur* to the Empress Josephine. He was ambassador to Vienna and the Hague.

The poor old house has been so mistreated that none of its early owners would recognize it; an added third story above the brick walls, misshapen stucco columns supporting a balcony, and other clumsy work. Only the remnant of the old entrance door remains, of the original finish of the front. One interesting feature of the outbuildings is still standing—a covered way through an old coach house or other structure which may have been the entrance to the stable yard; but it is doubtful if even this was not cut through at a comparatively recent date. Once

there must have been long ranges of stabling for the stage horses, and no doubt quarters for stableboys, hostlers, and other servants of the inn. Vandals have completely wrecked the interior of the house.

Two bronze tablets and one of the Tercentenary markers commemorate the romantic past which survives only in this forlorn specter of a once famous old house, upon a spot where there has been a tavern for more than two hundred and seventy-five years.

A little more than halfway to Northborough the road crosses Stirrup Brook. One day in August, 1707, Mary Goodnowe and a Mrs. Fay had left the garrison house and come here to gather herbs. Crossing the fields they were surprised by some Indians, and Mary, who was lame, was caught and scalped. Mrs. Fay got away and gave the alarm, and men from the garrison overtook the Indians and after a fight drove them off. Mary's body was found beside the path. A marker by the roadside calls attention to a narrow path by the edge of the woods which leads to her grave.

In Northborough's main street, the sign of the "Adams Hardware Company, Boots, Shoes and Clothing," still hangs above the front of just such a country store as we might have found in coaching days.

The old white meetinghouse stands by its ancient burying ground, just across the bridge over Cold Harbor Brook, and in its tower hangs one of Paul Revere's bells, cast in his foundry on Commercial Street in the North End of Boston.



## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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Martin's Tavern in Northborough is no longer to be found, I think; but this was Pease's first night's stop when he began running his Hartford stage.

The Westborough road, just opposite the Adams store, must often have been traveled by the eccentric thief, Tom Cook, son of a Westborough blacksmith. Cook's name is said to appear in the court records of many New England towns. He was known as the "honest thief," and called himself the "great leveler"; a curious character who robbed the rich to give to the poor. He would steal the dinner from a well-to-do farmer's kitchen, or grain and meal from a passing wagon, to give it away. Described as of prepossessing appearance, with piercing but kindly deep blue eyes, he was fond of children and went about with his pockets filled with toys—stolen, sad to say—for their amusement.

## II

### *The Old Boston Post Road (continued)*

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As she sat in the low-backed car  
The man at the turn-pike bar  
Never asked for the toll  
But just rubbed his old poll  
And looked after the low-backed car.

SAMUEL LOVER

A LITTLE more than three miles from Northborough, on a part of the road, the old King's Highway, which was abandoned when the Post Road was rebuilt, we shall find the Pease Tavern, at the time of the Revolution kept by Major John Farrar. It stands today among some modern houses, at the corner of the old road to Westborough, not far from the foot of Shrewsbury hill.

On an evening more than a hundred and fifty years ago, one of the circuit judges of the Massachusetts Colony stopped for the night at a tavern on the Post Road in Shrewsbury. It probably was Major Farrar's, later better known as the Pease Tavern.

Farrar was a Revolutionary officer of distinction, and his house was a well known resort for travelers to and from Boston. It was a wet night, and the judge sat down by the barroom fire to dry his clothes and saddlebags. As the evening wore on, neighboring farmers and hangers-on from the village began

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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dropping in, until above the rattle of pewter pots the din of voices rose higher and higher—the stranger sitting quietly, unobserved in his corner by the fire. “The people of Boston are distracted,” said one; “oppression will make wise men mad.” And another: “What would you say if a fellow should come to your house and tell you he was going to make a list of your cattle, that Parliament might tax you for them at so much a head?” And more to the same effect; and from one who had so far sat quiet: “Well, it’s high time for us to rebel; we must rebel some time or other, and we had better rebel now . . . If we put it off for ten or twenty years, and let them go on as they have begun, they will get a strong party among us, and plague us a great deal more than they can now.” The silent stranger was John Adams, and the time, the year before the outbreak of the Revolution.

The old house still stands by the wayside. Its later landlord, Levi Pease, was one of the earliest and most untiring of the promoters of turnpike roads—a term, by the way, which originally meant the bar or gate where the tolls were collected. To Pease was largely due the fine system of coaching roads and stagecoaches in America which was abandoned only with the coming of the railroads. Born on the Boston and New York Post Road in Enfield, Connecticut, a little over two hundred years ago, he has been called the Father of the Turnpike. In the spring of 1784 his tavern at Shrewsbury became the stopping place for the night at the end of his first day’s stage.

Today the old house is much changed, and all its stables and

## The Old Boston Post Road

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other outbuildings have long since disappeared. There used to be a big open shed for the loaded wagons and an ell to the house where the teamsters would sit waiting for their suppers. Along the walls were shelves for their boxes or other baggage, and here under the shed, in the side of the house, toe and hand holes were cut in the wall by which the men were expected to climb to their sleeping quarters above. From an outside door at the back, logs were rolled into the kitchen fireplace. The bar was in the west front room, and liquor, which was kept in the kitchen, was passed through a window in the wall, now covered by the modern wallpaper. Marks near the bar could long be seen where the men used to pitch knives for the first drink. At one time Masonic meetings were held in the northeast room upstairs.

Little of the original interior remains, but on the second floor, dividing two bedrooms, a swinging partition of pine paneling is still to be seen, which could be hooked up to the ceiling to form a dance hall.

Before his stage-driving days, Pease had been active in the Revolution and had had many adventures and hairbreadth escapes while serving as despatch bearer, his tact and shrewdness and unfailing reliability making him especially valuable. Once, however, according to tradition, he was late. Washington, who wished to buy a pair of horses, had made an appointment with him. When Pease arrived Washington, who it is said never waited for anybody, was gone. Pease was intrusted with the purchase of horses for the moving of the French artillery from

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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Newport to Yorktown, and foraged for the army on the march.

General Artemas Ward's house is on the left, at the foot of the hill. Ward was an officer in the French and Indian War. He commanded the Colonial army at Bunker Hill and suggested and directed the fortification of Dorchester Heights. After the war he entered Congress and later became Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas.

Thanks to the generosity of a great-great-grandson of the General, the house is now in the possession of Harvard College and is open to the public. It is beautifully cared for and furnished with many of the family possessions. There are portraits of the family, and many other articles of interest. A monument in front of the house tells us: "From this house on the news of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, he rode to Cambridge to take command of the militiamen hurrying towards Boston. With them he commenced the siege of Boston which eleven months later resulted in the expelling of the British Army from Massachusetts."

General Ward built the west end of the house in 1785, for his own occupation, leaving the old part for his son Thomas when he married. Thomas became High Sheriff of Worcester County, an important office then. In 1892 there were people still living who could remember Sheriff Ward with his cocked hat, knee breeches and black silk stockings, riding about the county in his yellow-bodied sulky drawn by a large white horse.

Ross Wyman of Shrewsbury was a blacksmith and gunmaker as well as public-house keeper. At a convention of blacksmiths

in Worcester (there were trade conventions even then), when it was resolved to do no work for the Tories, Wyman was chosen chairman. He made a gun for General Ward, said to have been a very good one, out of stubs of horseshoe nails. Once, coming home from Boston, he was stopped in Sudbury by a magistrate and two other men for traveling on Sunday. Having no other convenient weapon, he seized a codfish he had in his sleigh and beat them off; a feat he is said to have accomplished once before when held up by the press gang from a British man-of-war. Wyman lived to be ninety-one. His father had been at Lovewell's fight with the Indians, of which we shall hear later.

Harrington's, built for the accommodation of the stages, standing a mile beyond towards Worcester, is now a dwelling house. There were other taverns in the town, but the last on the road in Shrewsbury stood at the water's edge at Lake Quinsigamond.

Shrewsbury is still a pleasant, old-fashioned New England hilltop town, though the ubiquitous bungalow has encroached somewhat upon the old houses of the village street and spread over outlying farms, for it has become something of a country suburb of Worcester. But the old houses gathered about the white church on the hill still keep something of their aspect of forty years ago, when Shrewsbury was a typical New England village in a community of farmers. The exceptionally fine old mansion west of the green was the parsonage of Dr. Sumner, for sixty years the church's minister.

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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Although the interior of the church as originally built in 1766 has been remodeled, this has been well done, and with its high pulpit and reading desk it has an architectural quality to be found in only a few of our old churches. This is not the great white pulpit reached by a flight of steps, however, from which Dr. Sumner in full white wig and muslin bands looked down upon his congregation. That, with its sounding-board, was removed when the church was remodeled in 1834, and it was replaced by the "handsome mahogany pulpit with its crimson plush cushion and silk draperies," object of great interest to church members in adjoining towns, who sent delegates to see it. At this time the old square pews were pulled out and the building turned about with the steeple facing south. The spire was demolished by the hurricane of 1938, but this is to be replaced.

Dr. Sumner's sermons are said to have been "attractive, not being so long as to be wearisome." "Such an audience," said Elizabeth Ward, "has never been gathered in Shrewsbury since those days. There were men . . . magnificent in their queues and powdered hair, their lace ruffles, velvet breeches and silver shoe buckles, waiting upon . . . ladies in high-heeled slippers and huge poke bonnets, showing them into the different pews." In 1791 we find there was "some conversation about the expediency of having a bass viol in the congregation" and it was "voted to begin to sing Dr. Watts's version of the Psalms with His Hymns, —provided there be no objection lodged with the pastor."

One August Sunday in 1815, a young turkey flew onto the

pulpit beside Dr. Sumner while he was at prayer, and "without any noise stood upon the Bible with as little concern as it would upon the ground. Thus it stood while he baptised Mr. Giles' child by the name of Henry Baldwin. When we sat down to sing the last tune it left the Pulpit and went onto the Beam over Dea. Goddard's pew."

It was the tavern-keeper Balch Dean's dog who put an end to canine churchgoing in the time of Dr. Sumner's successor, the Rev. George Allen. Mr. Allen objected to dogs in church, and seems to have instructed the tithingman, Mr. Maynard, to make a test case of the next one that got in. A spirited chase ensued, as round and round went the poor little dog with the tithingman after him. To add to the confusion of this somewhat undignified proceeding, a blow fell upon the arm of old Mr. Stone, a deaf man in the front pew under the pulpit, thus suddenly aroused from meditation or slumber. But Balch Dean's dog was the last to attend Sunday morning service.

From the rear of the exceptionally beautiful cemetery back of the church, there is a far view over green farm lands and distant hills to the Wachusett range rising in striking prominence on the horizon.

Isaac Johnson and his bride, a daughter of the Earl of Lincoln, had received an early grant of land in Shrewsbury. She died during the first winter in Boston, however, about 1730, and her husband followed her within a month; so they never came to Shrewsbury. He was the first to be buried in the new King's Chapel burying ground on Tremont Street. Hannah Hunt, wife



## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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of Judge Sewall, also received a grant of land in Shrewsbury from her father the mintmaster; he who brought out his scales at his daughter's wedding and weighed the bride with pine-tree shillings for her dowry. Judge Sewall's name survives in connection with the town at Sewall's Pond and Hill.

As we approached the town from Northborough we passed at the foot of the great pasture on Tombolin Hill, recalling an eccentric character, a Scotchman of that name, who inspired various doggerel rhymes.

Tombolin had no breeches to wear,  
So he got his mother to make him a pair,  
Flesh side out and wool side in,  
They're warmer so, says Tombolin.

It was not far beyond Shrewsbury, on their way back to Boston on the Framingham road, that the three suspicious visitors at the Golden Ball in Weston seem to have narrowly escaped another adventure. By the time they reached the junction with the road to Marlborough it was snowing hard. Near here they were overtaken by a man on horseback who eyed them suspiciously, one of them particularly, "whom he looked at from head to foot as if he wanted to know me again," as doubtless he did, after which he "rode off pretty hard and took the Marlborough road, but by good luck we took the Framingham road again to be more perfect in it, as we thought it would be the one made use of." It was not, however, for as the result of the report of these gentlemen, spies of General Gage, the latter

## The Old Boston Post Road

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decided to take the Lexington and Concord route instead of the Post Road. The "travelers" were Captain Brown of the 52nd regiment and Ensign de Bernière (alias John Howe) of the 10th, and their servant. They had reached Worcester on the Saturday evening before, having "got safe to Mr. Jones tavern." There seem to have been Jones taverns all along the route, whose landlords fortunately were Tories. Jones of Worcester sat and talked "politicks" during the evening while they drank a bottle of wine together; and at daybreak the next morning, provided with some roast beef and brandy ("very necessary on a long march"), they set off on their return journey, stopping that night in Marlborough with Henry Barnes, another Royalist, whose house was on the site of the present Central Fire Station. Captain Timothy Bigelow of Worcester was the man on horseback who had overtaken them beyond Shrewsbury, three miles from Marlborough. They had been expected at the Williams Tavern, and the whole town was aroused and on the lookout for them. The next evening they stopped at Buckminster's in Framingham, where on their way out they had dined on sausages and later "made a very happy supper." On the return trip they were somewhat disconcerted to find the Framingham militia company at drill outside the house. They got off safely in the morning, however, by way of Jones Number Two of Weston, where they again got a warm welcome, sent off their report to Gage, and spent the night.

From Shrewsbury the old post road would have led us by the upper end of Lake Quinsigamond; the new turnpike of

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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1808 went over the floating bridge halfway down the lake, in 1860 replaced by the present causeway. For many years the Harvard and Yale boat race was held on Lake Quinsigamond. In those days, and for a good many years afterwards, the long, narrow lake was a quiet and placid sheet of water, with only an occasional cottage half hidden among the trees of its wooded shores, and one or two public boathouses or clubs near the causeway. But year by year "The Lake" became more and more popular as an evening and holiday amusement resort for Worcester crowds, and here Otto and Olga would come for a ride on the open trolley cars on a hot summer evening, have a row on the lake or watch the "vawdville" show in the outdoor theater, vastly superior to the present-day drive-in park. But we were speaking of stagecoach days.

The old road entered Worcester by Lincoln Street and Lincoln Square. At that time this was the town's center, and here, until fifteen or twenty years ago, stood the fine old mansion of the Salisburys, in its later years used as a clubhouse, until it gave way to the inevitable march of time and was demolished. Near by, on the site of the old Boston and Maine Railroad station was the Salisburys' store, beginning of the family fortune. Stephen Salisbury, a bachelor, was the last of the family. For a lifetime he had been a generous benefactor of the city of Worcester, which on his death received large bequests to public and charitable institutions, particularly the art museum, indebted to him for its fine new building.

I think all of the town's old coaching inns have now dis-

## The Old Boston Post Road

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appeared. The first, opened by Captain Moses Rice in 1719, stood in Main Street between Foster and Mechanic streets. Later it passed to Judge Chandler, a Tory. In 1785 it was known as the Sun Tavern. The old Bay State House, for many years, until the building of the Bancroft, the leading hotel, occupied the site of another tavern, for three generations or almost ninety years kept by the Heywoods. This house was removed to the corner of Salem and Madison streets, where in 1913 it was still being used as a tenement house.

Jones's tavern, where the British spies spent the Sunday, stood on the site of the old Sargent's Block, on Main Street at the corner of Southbridge, now occupied by the post office. But in writing of old Worcester taverns one may as well say at once, as in the old story of snakes in Ireland, there are none. The only later survival into our own times was the old Exchange Hotel. This stood in Main Street until a few years ago. Built in 1784 by Samuel Patch, and originally known as the United States Arms, it became the best tavern in the town. Pease's partner, Reuben Sikes, had it at one time and ran it in connection with the stages. Washington stopped here on his eastern tour, and it was a rendezvous for Shays and his followers. It was a three-story wooden building, with corner quoins and well detailed cornice and other finish of the period.

The old road left the city by Webster Square. At Cherry Valley was one more Jones tavern, a well known change house in coaching days. From here the road climbed the hill to Leicester. The Academy of Leicester, which like a number of old

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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schools has lost its identity as a private institution and has become the town high school, had many famous pupils, among them Eli Whitney of cotton-gin fame, Secretary of State William L. Marcy (neither of whom graduated), and several state governors.

The card clothing industry, afterwards important in Worcester, was begun in Leicester families in their own homes.

Spencer, five or six miles along the road, was one of the busiest of the stage towns. Here were three rival taverns, and at times as many as twenty-five coaches made the noon stage here. These taverns had stabling for several hundred horses. What a hurrying of waiters there must have been when the guests at the long tables sat down to ample, if somewhat hurried, dinners of prime roast beef and fresh country vegetables, washed down by tankards of ale! What a running to and fro of hostlers and stableboys in stable yards, while axles were greased and fresh horses put in for the next stage. These must have been great days for the horse traders. It was Anthony Trollope who said that not even a bishop could sell a horse without forgetting he was a bishop—an English version of the New England deacon stories.

One of the landlords had some tricks of the trade, according to Mrs. Earle. This publican and sinner would have the driver call out "Stage is ready" before the travelers had time to eat the meal they had ordered and paid for. One man paid no attention, calmly finishing his meal while the coach drove off, and calling for a bowl of bread and milk to finish off with. Not a

## The Old Boston Post Road

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spoon was to be found for him to eat it with. "Do you think them passengers was going away without something for their money?" said he to the excited landlord. "I could p'int out the man that took them spoons." One of the stableboys was sent off on a fast horse, and soon a coachload of angry people were outside the tavern door again. "Now," said the landlord, "you just p'int out the man that took them spoons." "Sartainly, Squire," said he who had stayed behind. "You'll find 'em all in the big coffee pot."

There is a tradition that the first mail carrier in Spencer was a dog belonging to one David Henshaw, which used to go to Boston and return with messages fastened to his collar.

Oldest and most famous in Spencer, perhaps, was the Jenks tavern on the site of the Massasoit house, opened in 1754. A French visitor stopping here overnight in 1788 (could it have been the Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt?) said, "The chambers were neat, the beds good, the sheets clean," but the supper was only passable. However, with tea, cider, and punch it cost only fourteenpence; so one could scarcely complain. Washington on his route, on the night of October 22, 1789, told Mrs. Jenks at breakfast that her bread was "very beautiful." Can it have been that he too found so little to praise? And a visitor of twenty-five or more years ago still seems to have been little better pleased. Perhaps it is better now.

Spencer was the birthplace of the brothers William and Tyler Howe and their nephew Elias, inventor of the sewing machine.

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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William had invented the Howe truss used in roofs and bridges, and Tyler, that blessing to mankind, the spring bed.

The course of the old road through Spencer was somewhat changed about seventy-five years ago. By East Brookfield and Brookfield and over the "Great Swamp" between the two, the road entered West Brookfield, the old part of the town, over Foster Hill. The Brookfield Inn, dating from Colonial days, still stands by the roadside. For the first part of the distance beyond the town the way is over an old gravel road through the woods, the modern highway going by the foot of the hill.

This must have been an attractive bit for highwaymen, where on the steep up-grade the coach could easily be stopped. Highwaymen were less common in America, however, at a time when the English roads were overrun with them. There robberies were almost daily incidents, and Claude Duval and Dick Turpin seem to have been popular heroes. It is said that the London and Bristol mail was robbed each week for five weeks. Our comparative freedom from these gentlemen seems to have been due to the fact that travelers had begun to use checks and letters of credit, while the English continued to carry gold and bank notes. Horse thieves were common, however, and there are amusing stories as to the ways of some of them. A notorious character was George White. He once stole a tavern keeper's horse, dyed the white feet, trimmed the mane, and cut or pulled some of the hair out of the tail and sold him back to his owner. Fading dye, and the horse's too evident familiarity with his stable, presently gave it all away, however. Owing a bill for

## The Old Boston Post Road

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board to another tavern keeper who owned a fine horse, he stole it from the pasture, rode away a few miles, sold the horse, and was paid. He stole it again that night, sold it, and again received the cash. Stealing it a third time, he returned it to the pasture, where it had never been missed, and, having collected enough cash, paid his board bill as an honest man should.

Once when White was being chased on a stolen horse, he dismounted at a sharp turn in the road and turned the horse loose with a cut of his whip. Tearing off his hatbrim so that it looked like a cap, he started boldly back to meet the officers. As the sheriff and his men pulled up, they shouted to him to know if he had seen a man riding fast. "Why, yes," said White, "a man passed me." They found the horse, but they never found White.

Not far from the old farmhouse at the top of Foster Hill is a large boulder behind which the Indians took shelter in their attack on the garrison house, for the site of the first village was here on the hill, though the exact location of the church and other buildings can no longer be traced. Here the old road is a hundred feet wide between the stone walls, and there is a far outlook over the hills; the Quaboag River winding through the valley below with its string of ponds sparkling in the sunlight on a summer's day. In winter this part of the road must have been cold and bleak and wind-swept: a hard pull for coach and horses through the drifting snow. After the Indian raids the village was rebuilt on the level site beyond the meadows at the foot of the hill. Hitchcock's, facing the common, was the prin-



## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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cipal tavern. The old house, which displays an attractive sign, has been restored to something like its original appearance apparently, at least as to the exterior. One more of Washington's stages on his New England journey, he wrote in his diary that part of the way there from Palmer was "pretty good, and a part (crossing the hills) very bad; but when over, . . . the country better cultivated." The tavern was built in 1760, and here also came John Adams and Lafayette. Let us hope the landlord's cider was satisfactory, as it is said that to the end of his life Adams had a large tankard of hard cider before breakfast. Some say that the young Jerome Bonaparte and his wife stopped at Hitchcock's soon after their marriage, before the less happy days when the aspirations of this younger brother of Napoleon and the influence of the various members of his ambitious family induced him to abandon the beautiful daughter of the wealthy Baltimore merchant for a wife of more exalted rank.

From West Brookfield the old road ran for several miles between wooded hills in the deep valley of the Quaboag, presently climbing the hills beyond West Warren, through Palmer Old Centre (Kingstown) to North Wilbraham. Through here in 1796 the first Massachusetts turnpike was opened, and the road became the great stage route from Boston to Springfield and New York. The same year the Frick Tavern was built, and the house became one of the most famous between Boston and Springfield. There were other well known houses on this part of the road. Walker's had been the principal inn of Revolutionary days, and more than two thousand of Burgoyne's cap-

## The Old Boston Post Road

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tured Hessians passed this way in the autumn of 1777 on their way to Cambridge. Baron Riedesel and his wife were entertained at the tavern, and one of the Hessians who died is said to have been buried near by. The house was burnt in 1912.

An early tavern at Palmer was Lamb's, standing in 1739 or earlier. Here in January of that year, when William Rogers was landlord, John and Zachariah Tarbell stopped on their way to Groton from Canada, and probably hired horses for the next stage of their journey. One July evening during Queen Anne's War more than twenty years before, three children of Thomas Tarbell of Groton had been surprised by a party of Indians while they were playing in a barn, or, according to other accounts, picking cherries, when before they could get down from the tree they were taken by the Indians and carried into Canada. They seem to have been well treated, and when the boys grew up they married Indian wives. The girl, Sarah, is said to have been sold to some French people who put her in a convent near Montreal. In the winter of 1739 the two boys made the trip to Groton to visit relatives at their old home, and they stopped at Lamb's on the way. They returned to Canada again, however, and were made chiefs in the Indian villages of Caughnawaga and St. Regis. A grandson of one of them is described as "a man of much address and ability as a speaker . . . selected as the mouthpiece of the tribe on the more important occasions"—a distinction which would seem to have some foundation in fact, since he was known as "Peter the Big Speak."

Descendants of the Tarbell brothers were living in St. Regis

fifty or sixty years ago, and very likely there are some there still. One, at least, served in the Civil War. In 1826 a young Frenchman named Fovel, from Montreal, induced Joseph Tarbell, whose Indian name was Torakaron, to go to Europe with him. Torakaron was to travel in his character as an Indian chief, and Fovel was to act as interpreter, agent, and treasurer, the idea being to obtain funds for the endowment of their church and presumably presents of money or other valuables for themselves. With letters of introduction, no doubt furnished by Fovel, from St. Regis and people of prominence in Montreal and Quebec, they sailed from New York for Havre, and arrived in Paris, where Fovel obtained an interview with the King, Charles X, upon whom they made so favorable an impression that he presented them with a considerable sum of money and three fine paintings and other articles of value. From Paris they proceeded by way of Marseilles to Rome, where they had an audience with the Pope. Finding that Torakaron could speak English, his Holiness invited him to a second interview, alone, when he was given a set of service books and silver vessels for his church, a gold jeweled rosary said to have been worth \$1,400, and other valuable presents. They then returned to Marseilles, where they spent the winter, and in 1828 continued by way of Paris, sailing from Havre for New York. Here the interpreter and "treasurer" absconded with everything except the rosary and paintings, leaving Torakaron without enough cash to get home. The paintings finally reached their destined places in the churches at Caughnawaga and St. Regis, where, fifty years or more ago,

## The Old Boston Post Road

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they were to be seen: that of St. Regis over the altar, and one of the others, St. Francis Xavier, near the pulpit.

At North Wilbraham on the Chicopee River, the old road has left the hills and crosses the broad, level area bordering the Connecticut, of which Washington wrote that he "rid for the first eight miles over an almost uninhabited pine plain."

Springfield historians lay claim to a tavern where Washington neither ate nor slept. But as he went through the town he had to stop somewhere, and at that time the most famous tavern there was kept by Zenos Parsons at the southeast corner of Court Square, and here he stayed, as later did President Monroe on his eastern trip in 1817. The Bates Tavern at the corner of Main and State streets was another famous house. This was kept by "Uncle Jerry" and Phoebe Bates, who had acquired such a reputation that we are told that travelers arriving from Europe took the stage for Springfield without stopping in Boston. In those early days this must already have been a pleasant town, with church and courthouse and a few old mansions gathered about the village green.

Travelers by the Upper Post Road for New York, leaving Springfield, went down on the west bank of the river through Suffield and Windsor to Hartford. In 1798 the New Haven and Hartford Turnpike through Meriden was chartered, and this became the great stage route between the two towns. There were four toll-gates between Hartford and New Haven.

Beyond New Haven coaches followed the road by the shore of Long Island Sound to Eastchester, across Harlem Creek and

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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through the old village of Harlem to lower Manhattan. In the course of many generations the route of the old road has been so often changed that it can scarcely be identified with modern highways.

### III

#### *The Middle Road*

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At a tavern, there is general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome: and . . . the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. . . . No, Sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.

DR JOHNSON

FOR some years before the Revolution, a solitary tavern stood on Boston Neck, just inside the town gate and not far from the gallows; conveniently near for those spectators at a hanging who were in need of refreshment or restoratives after viewing these intriguing spectacles, sometimes gruesome enough to be trying even to the strong nerves of our hardy ancestors. Like many an old-world tavern, it was conveniently placed to welcome the coming and speed the parting guest. Here the farmers from Natick or Dover on their way to early Boston market would stop on a cold winter's morning for a glass of hot flip or toddy, or the belated and way-worn traveler, approaching the town on a cold and rainy night, was glad of a cheering welcome and a glass in the snug bar parlor before braving the dangers of the lonely road along the Neck. In those days, long before the filling in of the Back Bay, the Neck was a narrow and marshy pass, a convenient lurking place for

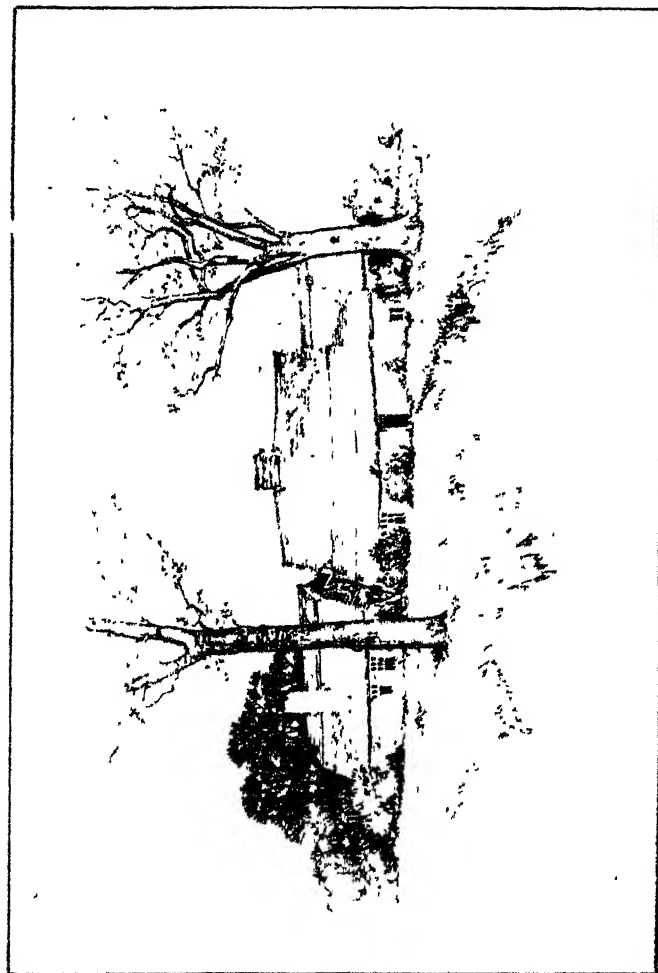
## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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thieves, where travelers often lost their way at night and came to grief in the marshes; the road so low in places that high spring tides often swept over it. If you will walk out Washington Street today and stop near the corner of Decatur or Troy Street, a block north of Dover (so named because the Dover farmers put up here), you will be standing near the site of the old house, the Rose and Crown. The advance defenses of the British at the time of the siege were a little farther out, between Dedham and Canton streets.

Outside the gate, a few rods beyond the outer works of the Americans, and just beyond the present Northampton Street, stood the George, then in an open field. Here many of the royal governors were received on their entrance into the town, and here, during the smallpox epidemic of 1721, the General Court met. Washington and his staff came here often for observation of the British redoubts, apparently not without some risk, for as the house was within musket shot of the British lines it was often hit.

Travelers over the Middle Road for Hartford and New York left Boston by way of the Neck and so by Roxbury and Dedham. The Hartford Turnpike was built about 1805. Fisher's, standing opposite the courthouse in Dedham in early days, must have been a busy place during the sittings of the court. Here the convention met on a day early in September, 1774, to hear the reading of Dr. Warren's "Suffolk Resolves," to be endorsed by the Continental Congress, then meeting in Philadelphia. Not far away on Eastern Avenue is the Fairbanks house, perhaps



*Fairbanks House, Dedham*





## The Middle Road

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the oldest in the country and certainly one of the most picturesque; a long, low, rambling structure, the central part with its sagging, high-pitched roof dating from 1636. The wings are of different periods of later date. A staid and respectable community, Dedham has a number of fine old mansions still facing its elm-shaded streets, with large country estates in outlying parts of the town.

In coaching days, the first change of horses was at the inn at Medfield, sixteen miles from Earle's in Hanover Street, where the coach had left at five in the morning—in winter going direct to Hartford on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, but in summer by way of Norwich. Unfortunates who chose the New York Commercial Mail through Worcester and Stafford left at one in the morning! At Medfield hostlers and stableboys came running at the sound of the guard's bugle as the coach came rattling down the hill to the tune of "Begone, Dull Care!" or "Oh, Dear, What Can the Matter Be?"

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, marketwomen would ride in from Medfield, Medway, and neighboring towns, starting about sunset, with butter, cheese, and other produce in a bag slung across the horse's back. Eggs were wrapped in tow and poultry hung by the horse's side; a bag of hay for the horse tied on behind. At Roxbury they turned into a horse shed, gave part of the hay to the horse, and, using the rest for a pillow, got a few hours' sleep before going on to Boston for the early market.

In 1820 the town's principal tavern was kept by no less a

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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person than Samuel Johnson. Here, on the Fourth of July of that year, a notable Independence Day dinner was eaten. A cannon had been brought from Walpole and placed in front of the tavern, served by gunners from the Walpole Artillery, while the Medfield military paraded, headed by the local drum and fife corps. The toasts on the program were numbered from one to ten, beginning with "Our Country," including the President and the Governor of Massachusetts and ending with "The Last and Present House of Representatives," with the appropriate sentiment: "Behold our bellies are as wine which hath no vent; they are ready to burst like new bottles. We will speak that we may be refreshed." Whereupon seven more toasts were drunk, and they "spoke," the sixth of these impromptu toasts to "The Reverend Clergy," after the reverend gentlemen had retired. The chronicler of this pleasant occasion comments, "The frequent repetition of these ceremonies, during the long string of toasts [seventeen in all], appears to have had an influence upon the spirits of the company; and some of the late sentiments, [not quoted above] indicate the nature of that influence," adding, however, "The celebration was . . . considered creditable to the patriotism and public spirit of the citizens." Johnson's tavern was on the site purchased in 1869 for the town hall.

In the late years of the eighteenth century there was a tavern in the south part of the town.

Medfield still has a Thief Detecting Society, which now meets only once in two years, with its chief concern the eating of a dinner and the election of officers for another term. When

## The Middle Road

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the society was organized in 1858 as the Norfolk and Bristol Horse Thief Detecting Society it had more than six hundred members from Medfield, Medway, Wrentham, Franklin, Walpole, Foxboro, Mansfield, and Attleboro. Later the society was divided and one was formed in Dedham.

Medfield was one of the towns burnt by the Indians during King Philip's War, seventeen or eighteen persons being killed or mortally wounded and thirty-two houses and other buildings burnt, including two mills—about half of the town.

It is said that the town once might have been the county seat, but its citizens declined the distinction on the ground that the distractions and temptations that the courts would bring would interfere with the industrious habits of the townspeople.

A mile beyond the village the road crosses the Charles, here a winding stream whose course meanders through green meadows and pasture-lands that slope upward to low wooded hills. Between Millis and Medway the turnpike skirts the "Black Swamps"—in King Philip's War a dangerous lurking place for marauding Indians, when these villages in the valley of the Charles suffered severely and the settlements at Medfield and Mendon were burned. In later days this part of the road no doubt was a convenient beat for highwaymen.

One day in the early autumn of the year 1821, a tall, well built stranger came into the taproom of the inn at Holliston, a few miles from Medway on a byroad. Having ordered his dinner he called for brandy, which he drank standing at the bar. It was the noon hour, and a few farm laborers and a teamster or

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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two were gathered about the bar or sat at small tables eating their bread and cheese with a glass of ale or flip. One or two others were standing around their teams in the inn yard or were leaning against the doorway preparing to leave. No one paid much attention to the stranger, who spoke to no one after he had ordered his brandy, seemingly absorbed in his own thoughts. Presently his eye wandered to a crudely printed broadside tacked to the pine paneling at one side of the bar. This seemed to arouse his interest, and while he sipped his brandy, little by little he edged his way nearer the wall, from time to time glancing furtively at the notice. A close observer might have seen that he gulped the last of his drink with little zest, and paying his score, quietly slipped out by the door leading to the inn yard at the rear. Calling for his horse, to the surprise of the hostler, for the feed was only half eaten, he mounted and rode off down the road at a smart trot. Meanwhile the landlord, coming in search of his guest, found he had a good dinner cooling on the table, with no one to pay the bill. About this time there came a clatter of hoofs on the road outside, and the sheriff, followed by two of his men, hurried into the bar and, rushing up to the landlord, wanted to know if he had seen a tall man riding a chestnut horse, answering to the description in the broadside: a man with light brown hair and blue eyes, in nankeen breeches and black coat. "Why, Landlord," said one of the farmers, "that was your man who ordered your dinner!"

The guest was the notorious highwayman Mike Martin, who

had ridden from Medford, where he had gone on hearing there was to be a grand party at Governor Brooks's, and thinking there "might be some fat ones there . . . decided to be one of the company." On the way he had held up Major Bray and his wife in their chaise on the Medford road. Seeing that Madam Bray was trying to conceal her gold chain, Martin politely assured her that he never robbed ladies. Tried and convicted for the robbery of the Brays, he was sentenced to the gallows, but escaped from the jail at Lechemere Point, having filed through his chain with a case knife. He might have got away; but his legs had been weakened by the heavy chain which he had worn, and he had to run with the seventeen-pound weight in his hands. At his execution he behaved with "great propriety and sobriety, . . . professed penitence, and went to the gallows with composure," having arranged his dress and hair carefully; and, showing "a kind disposition to all," he gave the signal for the drop himself. A tall handsome man, with blue eyes and fine complexion, of fine figure and great strength and endurance, "his marked intelligence and sweetness of expression" were most appealing: truly an ideal highwayman, whom it must have been a pleasure to meet.

Martin's father, an Irishman of Kilkenny, had apprenticed him to his uncle, a brewer, by whom he was beaten and generally ill treated until he stole five guineas from his father and ran away to Dublin, where, always engaged in petty thieving, he seems to have become a sort of understudy of Captain Thunderbolt, alias the "Reverend" John Doherty. Together

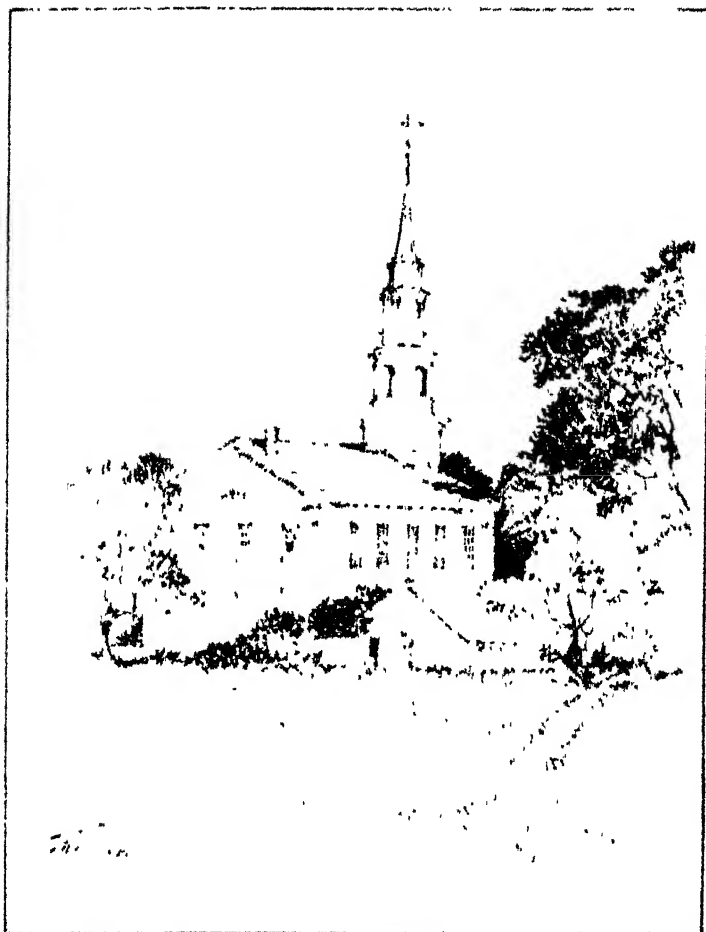
## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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they rode the highways of Ireland and Scotland until the hue and cry became too hot for them, and first one and then the other fled to America. After various adventures, Martin finally landed in Salem, where he began his American career; and the gentlemanly profession of Claude Duval and Dick Turpin could scarcely have been better represented in America than by the genial and engaging Mike, alias Captain Lightfoot.

Milford is an old town, one of the early settlements in this region about the middle of the seventeenth century; but I am afraid we shall find little here to remind us of its early coaching days, though the beginnings of its one-time prosperous shoe industries date from the small boot shops of about the time of activity on the turnpike. Its quarries of pink Milford granite, however, have furnished stone for the Boston Public Library, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, and New York's two great railroad stations among many other notable buildings. The adjoining town of Hopedale, with a thriving industry of its own, is practically a residential section of Milford. Here the Drapers, large manufacturers of textile machinery, have long maintained a model community where strikes are practically unknown. In the days of the stagecoaches, Hopedale was a part of Mendon, and in 1841 Adin Ballou, a Universalist clergyman, established a communistic religious settlement here, later taken over by Eben Draper.

Between Hopedale and Mendon the road crosses the summit of the long range of hills extending from Fay's Mountain in Westborough to Candlewood Hill in Blackstone, broken only



*Mendon Church*





## The Middle Road

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at the valley of the Mill River below Hopedale. Near here its watershed is separated from the Charles only by a low ridge less than a mile across.

Near the airport at Mendon is the fine old house built by Jonathan Russell, one of the commissioners from the United States for the Treaty of Ghent in 1814. But Mendon has a house, once a tavern, which has the distinction of having refused a night's lodging to Washington. The owner being absent and his wife ill, a maid is said to have turned the presidential party away, and they went on a mile farther to Taft's. Here the mortified and embarrassed landlord, Colonel Amidon, accompanied by his daughter, hurried after them, hoping to induce the President to return. Washington had retired for the night, but Amidon is said to have been a friend of the President, who received him in dressing gown, nightcap, and slippers. Of Taft's, Washington says, "Though the people were obliging, the entertainment was not very inviting." Learning, however, that Taft had named one of his sons after him and another for Mrs. Washington's family, and pleased with the "modest and innocent looks" of the landlord's daughters, he sent each of them a present of a piece of chintz for a dress and a gift of money to one of them. In his diary, Washington refers to this house of Samuel Taft's as in Uxbridge. If we are not mistaken, the Tafts were ancestors of a later president. Washington left before sunrise, on Saturday the 7th of November, "passing through Douglass wood" on the way to Thompson; and a cold and dreary ride it must have been over rough roads in a carriage

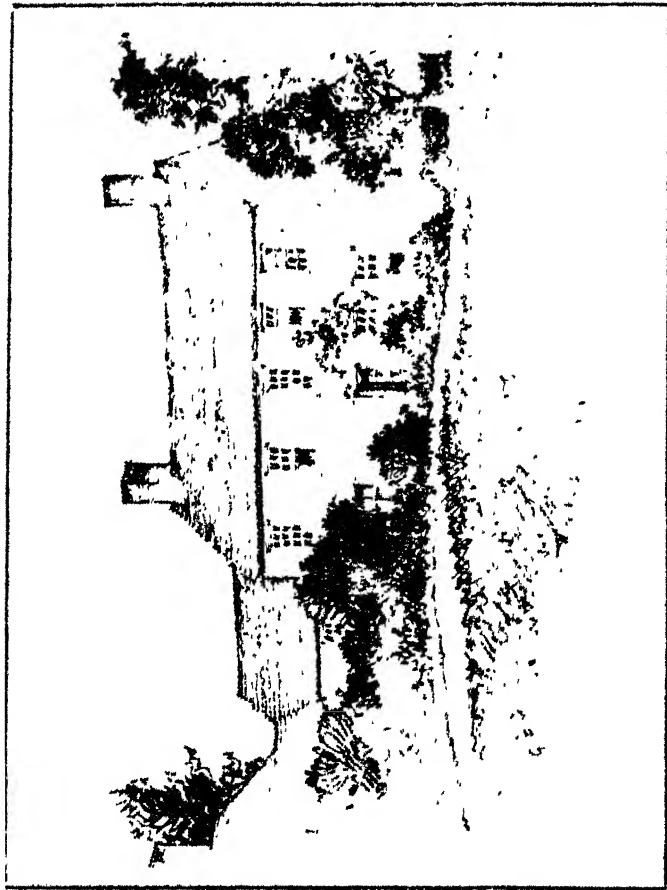
## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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hung on leather "braces." "The first stage," he says, "with a small exception, is intolerable bad road, and a poor and uncultivated country."

Beyond East Douglas and Douglas the route passes through a region still traversed by few roads, once the land of the Nipmuck or Nipnet Indians (Nipnet meaning "Fresh Water Country"): a region of many streams and "great ponds"—the fishing and hunting grounds of the tribe—and rolling hills, still sparsely settled, among which rise the sources of the Blackstone and French rivers. Near East Thompson the road crosses the Connecticut line within half a mile of the Rhode Island corner.

On Thompson hill the old Stiles Tavern still faces the green: a long yellow building dating from 1818. Since 1830 it has been an inn, but Washington, on his journey forty years before, breakfasted at Jacob's, a place he records as "not a good house." Stiles was a justice of the peace, and it is said that at one time the tavern was much favored by eloping couples. Thomas Dorr, the leader in the rebellion in 1842 when an attempt was made to overthrow the limited suffrage laws of Rhode Island, was in hiding here, and is said to have escaped the officers by the complicated system of staircases in the old house. On the green the Connecticut militia mustered in '75 at the call from Lexington, though most of the houses here today date from the early nineteenth century. All together it is a pleasant region of well kept country estates with old-fashioned houses facing the shaded streets of the town. Sir Robert Thomp-



*Bowen Tavern, Woodstock, Conn.. The Hall  
(The house is now the home of Dr. Hamilton Holt)*



## The Middle Road

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son received a royal patent for the land now comprising the township, though he never came to America.

About a mile from the crossroads on the Quaddick road is the site of a Nipmuck Indian fort. The summit of the hill above the road overlooks the Quinebaug valley and the large Quaddick Reservoir.

Descending to the narrow valley of the Quinebaug at the foot of the hills, the road crosses the river at Putnam, originally Pomfret Factory, a busy town which has grown up at the Cargill Falls.

Putnam is one of the New England manufacturing towns which attracted the thrifty and industrious French from Canada. They came with their families in the mid-nineteenth century, and on a Saturday night with their wives and children and grandchildren they crowd the narrow winding ways or stand about the street corners, to spend the contents of their weekly pay envelopes. Many of the shops have signs in both French and English. Putnam of course was named for that "favorite son" of Connecticut, the Revolutionary general Israel Putnam, whose farm is in near-by Brooklyn.

Climbing the steep hill by a sharp turn in the road just beyond the river, we begin to approach the charming and altogether delightful region of the Pomfret and Woodstock hills, part of those long ridges running north and south divided by the river valleys which descend to Long Island Sound—a region of farm lands, wooded hills, and old pastures dotted with dark pointed cedars, often, sad to say, fast growing up

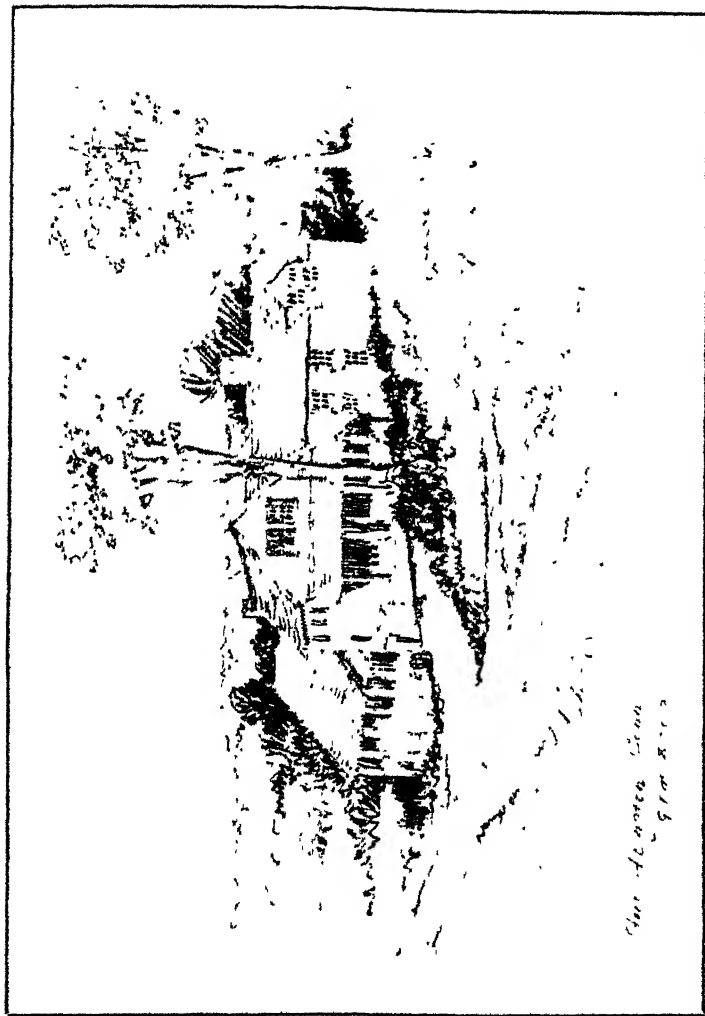
## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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to dense clumps of tamarack and scrub oak or birch. From the crest of the hill above Putnam there is a far view beyond the smoking factory chimneys of the town, across the valley and all the distant country to the south.

On his return journey to New York in 1789, Washington took the Middle Road, partly, as he says, in the hope of seeing his friend General Putnam; but finding that Putnam lived five miles out of his road, and that "without deranging my plan and delaying my journey I could not do it," he gave it up. Colonel Thomas Grosvenor's inn at Pomfret was among the forty-odd to which he gave fame by his presence, though the presidential party only baited there. Sad to relate, the Ben Grosvenor Inn which stands facing the village street today is not the inn of Washington's time, having been built around a farmhouse dating from about the middle of the eighteenth century. The house as we see it was established in 1872 by Benjamin Grosvenor, a direct descendant of Pomfret's first settler.

Today Pomfret is a pleasant place with the country estates of summer residents, their gardens overlooking the valley and wooded hills beyond. Pomfret School is a preparatory school for the sons of well-to-do families; its charming Norman chapel stands not far from the road, near which is a fine reproduction of the monumental sundial at Corpus Christi College, Oxford (the other buildings are mostly in the style of modern colonial). In Pomfret Street is Colonel Grosvenor's house of 1792, now remodeled and occupied as one of the buildings of the Rectory School for boys. A house near the head of the street was a



The Country Store  
Abington, Conn.

Country Store, Abington, Conn.





## The Middle Road

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country store where Washington bought some "bad tobacco." Evidently he preferred that of the Virginia plantations to the Connecticut product of the time.

Pomfret lies about midway on a crossroad between Woodstock and Brooklyn, two of the most delightful of Connecticut's many delightful old towns and villages. Brooklyn is six or seven miles to the south on the road to Norwich. Eighteenth century houses, two of which were taverns, and the town hall and church, are grouped about the village green. The church has a Paul Revere bell, or did have before the 1938 hurricane, for Brooklyn suffered severely, some of its buildings and many fine trees being badly damaged. Though not on the post road, the town has so much of interest that it should not be missed. Most of Brooklyn was originally comprised in Sir John Blackwell's manor of Mortlake. Blackwell had been an officer under Cromwell, and it seems ironical that the settlement was intended as a refuge for Irish dissenters. Later it was divided into the two manor farms of Kingswood and Wiltshire, purchased by Governor Belcher of Massachusetts, who sold Kingswood to the royalist Godfrey Malbone, and Wiltshire to Major Israel Putnam. The little Episcopal church built by Malbone's son, the second Godfrey, stands surrounded by the graves of early parishioners in its little churchyard about a mile from the green, on the easterly road to Pomfret along the crest of the ridge. Once a year, on All Saints Day, surviving members of the family gather for a memorial service in the church. The interior has been a good deal remodeled, the pulpit cut in two

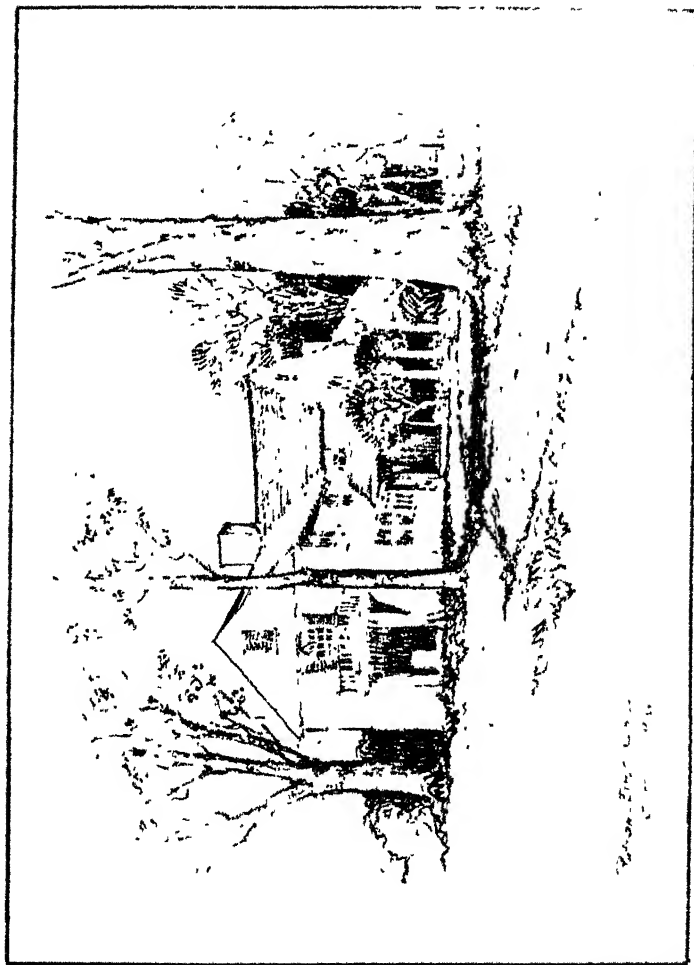
## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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to make the two desks and the sounding board removed and lost. Putnam Elms, the original Malbone farm, is on the left of this road about a mile farther on.

The Putnam farm was on the present main road between Brooklyn and Pomfret, about halfway to Pomfret station. The famous wolf den was in a ravine about midway between the station and the little crossroads village of Abington. Here, according to tradition, Putnam crawled in after the wolf, shot her with his musket after two unsuccessful attempts, and seized her by the ears, while his frightened companions dragged them both out by the rope Putnam had tied around his waist, half overcome and choked by the fumes and smoke. The same Putnam escaped from the British at Greenwich by plunging down the rocky precipice on his horse; he had seen the approaching soldiers when shaving, it is said, and rushed out for his horse with his face half lathered.

Traveling over "intolerable roads," Washington reached Ashford, some nine miles beyond Pomfret, on a Saturday. His Sunday at the Perkins tavern there seems not to have been particularly agreeable, for again he describes it as "not a good one." At the meetinghouse in the village the next day he attended morning and evening service "and heard very lame discourses from a Mr. Pond." An officious tithingman reminded the President of the Connecticut laws against traveling on Sunday. Washington was a staunch Episcopalian and very likely was bored by the long extemporaneous prayers of the Reverend Mr. Pond.



*Putnam Elms, Brooklyn, Conn.*



## The Middle Road

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In early times all of this was a wild forest region, remote from any civilization. Today as the road climbs from valley to hilltop there are distant views across these old Connecticut farm lands, with here and there a distant church spire; a group of white houses or weather-beaten farm buildings by the roadside, with the long line of the highway topping the next hill, beyond which the valleys rise to still other lines of hills on the horizon. From Phoenixville the road followed an old route of the Connecticut Path. In coaching days there were roadside taverns at most of these crossroad villages, and a few of the old houses still remain, at Warrentown and Mansfield and a few miles farther on at Coventry. The Palmer Tavern at Warrentown had a kitchen forty feet long with the taproom at one end. At South Coventry, a couple of miles over the hill from Mansfield, on the Willimantic road, is the Bidwell Tavern, an old red building with two-story porch facing the road. Here in the taproom, travelers waiting for the Providence coach on winter nights were wont to fortify themselves for the long, cold ride. The old place fell to the low degree of a "package store" where, before the wartime ban on tin, passing truck drivers bought their beer in cans; and the villagers still wait here for the single daily bus to Hartford. Here a little village long ago grew up on the banks of the small stream at the foot of the hills, where the builders of the old stone factory early took advantage of the water power.

A sign at the crossroads reminds us that Nathan Hale, the patriot spy of the Revolution, lived in a house three miles along

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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the road. He was born on the opposite side, in a house no longer standing. In the old cemetery on the hill, a rather ponderous granite monument to his memory overlooks the road. Facing the little shaded green at the top of the hill, was the site of the first church, and here and along the road on the crest of the hill are some charming old houses set among the trees, their white-fenced dooryards gay in summer with old-fashioned flowers.

Four miles beyond the straggling village of Coventry, the road passes between the high rocky cliffs of Bolton Notch, after which it approaches South Manchester and the suburbs of Hartford.

The Woodbridge Tavern at Manchester Green was one more of Washington's stopping places—now, sad to say, fallen to the level of a tenement house.

There is a tradition that a tavern kept by Jeremy Adams, later known as Wadsworth's, stood for nearly two hundred years in Hartford where the great building of the Travelers Insurance Company stands today: the first tavern in Hartford. Here the General Court is said to have met with the royal governor, Andros, in 1687, when the King had threatened to take away the colony's charter. While the precious document lay on the table, the candles were suddenly blown out. When they were relighted the charter was gone, not to appear again until Andros had lost his authority. According to that tradition dear to the hearts of all true and loyal citizens of Hartford, it was concealed by Captain Joseph Wadsworth in a hollow

## The Middle Road

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oak, where it had remained until James II had fled to France and Andros was recalled.

As the Adams tavern stood hard by the meetinghouse, the pillory probably was in this vicinity, where Nicholas Olmstead was sentenced to be "sett on" next Lecture day, "a lytle before the beginning and to stay on a little after the end."

There were various routes between Hartford and New Haven, but when the turnpike going by way of Meriden was chartered in 1798, this became the regular coach road to New Haven. From here coaches over the various routes from the east followed the old road along the Sound to the neighborhood of Harlem, from whence they took somewhat different routes to the Battery.



## IV

### *The Lower Post Road*

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"Then," said I, "for what do you take me?"

"Why, for some runaway young gentleman," said the postillion. "No offence, I hope?"

"None at all; no one is offended at being taken or mistaken for a young gentleman, whether runaway or not . . ."

"So we ran away together?" said I.

"Ay, ay," said the postillion, "to Gretna Green, though I can't say that I drove ye, though I have driven many a pair."

GEORGE BORROW, *Lavengro*

THE Lower Post Road followed the route of the Middle Road as far as Dedham, from there going by way of South Dedham (now Norwood), Wrentham, Attleboro, and Providence, and on by Greenwich to Kingston. Another route followed the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay through Bristol to Newport Ferry, joining the other at Kingston.

Passing through Westerly to Stonington and New London, the road is seldom more than two or three miles from the Sound for all of the way to New York. By the accounts we have, the early years of that part of the road in the vicinity of Narragansett Bay were especially rich in blood-curdling tales of murder and sudden death. Near Mowry's Tavern in Providence, a particularly bloody murder was committed. One

## The Lower Post Road

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winter morning in 1660, a carpenter named Clauson, said to have been a thrifty and much respected young man and a friend of Roger Williams, was found with his head split open lying in a clump of barberry bushes at the meeting of two paths near the tavern. A neighbor named Hernton was accused by the dying man of having induced an Indian to do the deed in revenge for some unknown offense. The children of Hernton, and his children's children, are said to have been marked with split chins "and haunted by barberry bushes"; a curse put upon them by the murdered man for Hernton's crime. The Indian was arrested and locked up in the tavern. Though the records give an account of his trial and committal to Newport jail, there is no record of his execution.

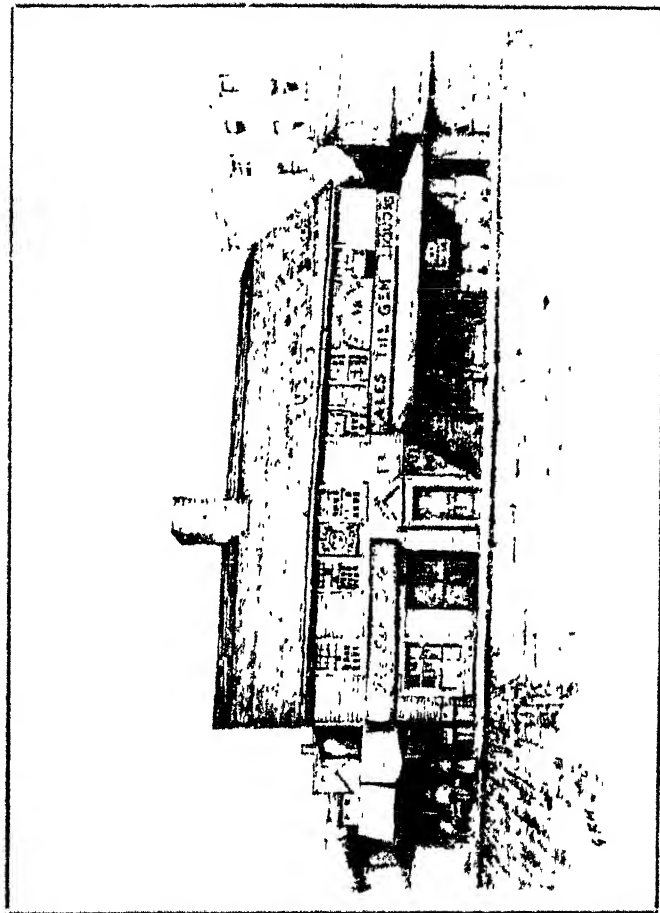
Mowry's was the first of Providence taverns, dating from before King Philip's War, when for some reason or other it escaped destruction, though nearly all the town was burned. Much enlarged, it stood on Abbott Street until 1900.

One morning two years or more before the Battle of Lexington, the thrifty housewives of Providence, hurrying to the market house for their weekly buying, were attracted by a crowd of the male citizens of the town gathered about the hay scales. Standing on tiptoe to look over the shoulders of their husbands and brothers, they were startled to see a placard bearing the lion and the unicorn of the royal arms, and under them a proclamation stating that "any person or persons who shall discover the persons guilty" in the recent destruction of his Majesty's ship *Gaspee* should be entitled to a reward of five

hundred pounds; and for the discovery and apprehension of the persons "who acted or called themselves or were called by their accomplices the head sheriff or the captain," a hundred pounds additional. Presently Mr. Joseph Aplin, "a distinguished lawyer" was seen to approach, and, upon the little crowd making way for him, he read the offending notice and immediately struck it down with his cane.

If some of these male citizens had visited Mr. Sabin's tavern on South Main Street on a certain evening not long before (and it is more than likely that some of them had), they would have found a crowd gathered in the southeast room. Most of these would have been handling their flintlocks, and a glance through the open door into the kitchen would have revealed the further surprising fact that another group were gathered around the fire casting bullets. Presently, all quietly left the house and crossed the street to Fenner's wharf, where they got into eight longboats ready there. With oars well muffled, they dropped down the river to Namquit Point, where the revenue cutter had grounded that afternoon when chasing Mr. Benjamin Lindsay's sloop *Hannah*. It was not until they were within two hundred feet of the *Gaspee* that they were discovered by the watch and hailed. In a moment an officer appeared on the gunwale, clad only in his shirt, and again challenged them. This time Captain Whipple, in charge of one of the boats, answered: "I am the sheriff of the county of Kent, damn you. I have a warrant for your arrest, so surrender!" At the same time, a man who was standing on the thwart of one of

80



*The Bull Dog, Providence*



## The Lower Post Road

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the boats seized a gun from young Ephraim Bowen and fired at the officer, who fell to the deck. In less than a minute the boats were alongside, and the men boarded. John Mawney, a young medical student, at once went below, where the officer, a lieutenant, had been carried, and dressed his wounds. The crew of the schooner were told to collect their belongings, and they were taken off in their boats; the last boat remaining to set fire to the schooner.

At least one of the crew was grateful for his treatment. The English officer in command was Lieutenant William Duddington, and to the end of his life the young surgeon wore a silver stock-buckle which Duddington gave him in gratitude for his skillful dressing of his wounds. For some time the *Gaspee* had been overhauling vessels in the bay, firing on oyster boats and even landing on the Narragansett shore and carrying off hogs and firewood. It must be said in extenuation, however, that there was much smuggling along the shores of the bay and sound. The inhabitants of the shore villages had been active in carrying on an illicit trade, and they had been warned by Admiral Montague in command of the British fleet at Boston that any that were taken while in conflict with the revenue officers would be hanged as pirates.

On the Providence road, we are at last able to record a real duel, at sunrise, with seconds and all in due form and in the approved manner of the eighteenth century, though it took place in the first years of the nineteenth.

It was just outside of Providence that the irascible William

Austin fought a duel with the son of General Eliot, a brother-in-law of the Boston merchant Thomas Handasyd Perkins. Young Austin, who was a nephew of Benjamin Austin, editor of the Boston *Independent Chronicle*, had written a political article of a damaging nature against Eliot's father. The two meeting one day, they came to blows, when Austin is said to have had the better of the scrimmage, with the result that the younger Eliot, a young man of twenty-two or -three, sent a challenge to the editor's nephew. Seconds were duly chosen, Henry Sargent acting for Eliot and Charles P. Sumner for Austin; Dr. John C. Warren acting as surgeon.

The party reached Providence in the evening, "had a pleasant supper," and at four the next morning proceeded to a piece of woods near the Massachusetts boundary. Taking places at twelve paces apart, they fired together and Austin was wounded in the lower jaw. He insisted upon another shot, however, and Austin was again hit, this time in the thigh. Neither of the balls had penetrated very deep, however, Sargent purposely having taken the precaution to make the charges rather light. "After the affair was over," wrote Dr. Warren, "we got into carriages and drove to the first tavern in the State of Massachusetts, on the way homeward," probably on the road between Providence and Attleboro. Here Dr. Warren dressed Austin's wounds, "and he recovered without any subsequent inconvenience."

The *Chronicle*, a Jacobin paper, afterwards strangely merged with the Whig *Advertiser*, was the vehicle for constant

## The Lower Post Road

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abuse and denunciation of its political opponents, and the Austin family seem to have been more or less constantly in hot water. About the time of the duel the editor's son was shot in State Street by Thomas Selfridge, a lawyer. Selfridge, indignant at attacks made upon him by the paper, had retaliated in kind and had been threatened with violence by Austin's son, who, meeting him in State Street about noon one day, struck him on the head with a heavy stick. Selfridge, who had been warned of the threat against him, drew a pistol and shot the young man dead. He was ultimately acquitted.

A few miles down the shore of the bay, at Warwick, was another tavern which saw stirring times during the Revolution. To David Arnold's, on Warwick Neck, the British General Prescott was brought when he was captured by Lieutenant Colonel Barton on the night of the 10th of July, 1777. In the previous December, the fleet and troops under Sir Henry Clinton had arrived at Newport. Lieutenant Colonel Barton, an officer of the state troops posted at various points along the shores of the bay, had somehow learned that Prescott often spent the night at the house of a man named Overton, about five miles above Newport on the west road leading to Bristol Ferry. Barton had found out that, for reasons of his own, Prescott kept only a small guard at the house. Barton's regiment was stationed at Tiverton, and his colonel, Stanton, issued orders for the procuring of five whaleboats, well manned by about forty volunteers. These left Warwick Neck with oars muffled, passing so close to the enemy's ships, near Hope Island, that



they could plainly hear the watch's cry of "All's well," and landed at a point on shore near the Overton house. Telling the sentry who challenged them at the gate that they were a party out looking for deserters, one of them was able to surprise the guard and take away his gun. The frightened Overton showed them Prescott's room, where they found him sitting in his nightclothes on the edge of the bed. His aide, Major Barrington, who had got out of the window and tried to give the alarm, was captured outside the house. Though Prescott begged to be allowed to put on his clothes, they hurried him off half dressed and barefoot to the boats as signal rockets began to flare and three cannon shots gave the alarm. From the landing point to Arnold's tavern was a short distance, but Prescott's bare feet were cut and torn by briars and he begged for a pair of shoes, which one of the men brought him from an officer at the camp at Warwick Neck. Prescott complained that his feet were swollen and that the shoes were too small, whereupon the man protested that his orders were to put the shoes on General Prescott, not to see that they fitted. At the tavern the next morning, noticing that the general had no cravat, the kind-hearted wife of the landlord gave him one of her best white neckerchiefs. After breakfast, Prescott and Major Barrington were driven in a coach under guard to Providence, whence they later were sent to Washington's headquarters in New Jersey; and in the spring Prescott was exchanged for General Charles Lee.

Travelers by the old Narragansett road once witnessed a sight not uncommon in England in the eighteenth century,

## The Lower Post Road

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but rare in America—that of a man hanging in chains. Near the old South Ferry, on the road between Newport and the mainland, a man was murdered by a fellow traveler. He had had his hair dressed by a woman at the inn where they had spent the night, and she had noticed a curious white lock. On this identification was constructed a chain of evidence which led to his arrest and sentence. For months the body hung by the roadside, a gruesome sight, the poor bones rattling a dismal tattoo as they swung to and fro in every stirring breeze, a terror to passing school children and to their elders too, after dark, until at length the chains rusted and fell apart, and boys used the heavy links to crack their hickory nuts.

At certain lonely crossroads along this route suicides were buried—in accordance with another pleasant custom of the times, with a stake driven through the heart—places of keen interest, no doubt, to travelers, which the coachman would point out with a flourish of his whip as the coach went rattling by.

Not far from the scene of the hanging in chains was another crossroads of less gruesome associations. Here took place several of those extraordinary ceremonies known as “shift” marriages. In accordance with some eccentric law or custom of the time, a widow, about to be married again, could be freed of her dead husband’s debts by being married at the crossroads “clad only in her shift.” Sometimes she was enjoined to cross the King’s highway four times, thus scantily dressed, a performance at which our forefathers professed to be more scandalized

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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than they would have been in the present age and fashion. Jemima Hill, a Narragansett widow, was thus married at midnight "where four roads meet," clad only in her shift, and in the records of the town of Warwick may be seen the following entry:

"These are to signify unto all ministers of justice that Henry Strait Jun of East Greenwich in ye colony of R.I. and Prov. Plantation took Mary Webb of ye town of Warwick in ye colony aforsd. widow in only a shift and no other Garment in ye presns of Avis Gordon May Collins and Presilar Crandall and was Lawfully Married in Warwick ye first day of August 1725 by me Recorded ye 5th of Nov 1725 Pr John Wicks T.C."

Another entry records that the bride had "no other clothing but her shifting smock"; and on the 22nd of February, 1720, Abigail Culverwell of South Kingston was taken in marriage "after she had gone four times across the highway in only her shift and hair low and no other clothing"—an ordeal, surely, for a night in February!

And another record:

"In the town of Newport in the Colony of Rhode Island and on the 13th of September 1714 John Gavett of the town and county above said did meet with Sarah Stephenson stark naked save only her shift and they being lawfully published the said John Gavett did accept in marriage the above said Sarah Stephenson stark naked save only her shift without housing or lands or any personal state whatever, and in said street I did join together in marriage the above said John Gavett and Sarah

## The Lower Post Road

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Stephenson on the day and year above said as witness my hand and seal hereto affixed.

“NATH’L SHEFFIELD *Assistant.*”

For two other romances of this part of the road I cannot do better than quote from Mrs. Earle’s delightful “Stage-Coach and Tavern Days”:

“If our Narrangansett coach went over the Ridge Hill, the driver surely pointed out the spot where a lover once hid his coach and horses till there rode up from a bridle-path near by the beauty of Narragansett, ‘Unhappy Hannah Robinson,’ who jumped from her horse into the coach and drove off headlong to Providence to be married. An elopement should end happily, but the adjective ever attached to her name tells the tale of disappointment, and it was not many years before she was borne back, deserted and dying, lying on a horse-litter, to the spacious old home of her childhood, which is still standing. And one day down this road there came hotly lashing his horses a gay young fellow driving tandem a pair of Narragansett pacers, and he scarcely halted at the tavern as he asked for the home and whereabouts of the parson. But the tavern loungers peeped under the chariot-hood and saw a beautiful blushing girl, and they stared at a vast, yawning, empty portmanteau, strapped by a single handle to the chariot’s back. And soon two angry young men, the bride’s brothers, rode up after the elopers, who had been tracked by the articles of the bride’s hastily gathered outfit which had been strewn from the open portmanteau along the road in the lovers’ hasty flight.”

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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Few of Newport's old inns or taverns remain today, but the house still standing on Marlborough Street, at the corner of Farewell, once was the White Horse Tavern, and here the Rhode Island General Assembly met. It is but little changed today.

In the days when every sea captain who went to the West Indies was expected to bring home a turtle and a keg of pickled limes, Mr. Jahleel Brenton of Newport owned a slave who is said to have had such surpassing skill as a turtle cook that his reputation extended over the country far and wide. He was lent to his master's friends on special occasions, and his services were in such demand that once in a while he was even hired out to taverns. Yet this prince of cooks went by the unsavory name of Cuffy Cockroach.

Travelers by the road to the old ferry would have passed near the mysterious stone tower, then a much more prominent object in the landscape than it is today. Commonly known as the "Old Stone Mill," despite the theories of Mr. Philip Ainsworth Means, who has written a book about it, it was at any rate being used as a mill by Governor Benedict Arnold in 1677, for he refers to it in his will. Whether or not it was built for a church by the Norsemen in the eleventh or twelfth century, as Mr. Means seems inclined to believe, is as much of a mystery as ever. None are more jealous of their own opinions than the archeologists, each rallying his friends to his own cause, each equally determined in support of his theories; reluctant to give in.

## The Lower Post Road

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The tower is in Touro Park, and near by is the fine old mansion of Governor Gibbs.

The Newport route of the old road joined the other at Kingston, a quiet old town with a wide main street, where much of the old-time flavor still lingers. Kingston Inn has had an uninterrupted existence of more than a hundred and eighty years as a house of entertainment for travelers. There is an old taproom, a staircase with carved newel posts and balusters, and many of the old fireplaces are still in use. The "Old Tavern," dating from about the same time, is reputed to have one of those mysterious underground passages so popular in Europe in the troubled days of civil strife and frequent assassinations or escapes. The passage leading from the cellar of the Old Tavern is said to extend for "a quarter of a mile to the westward." In the time of the landlord Joe Reynolds, the house was a gathering place for the wits and raconteurs of the country round. After Reynolds's death it was carried on by his son John—like his father, "a most genial and amiable man."

At the little town of Wakefield, three or four miles beyond Kingston, the Sound is reached at the head of a little bay separating Point Judith from the mainland, where the Kingston road joins the main route, U.S. No. 1. At Westerly, some twenty miles farther on, we encounter traces of the ubiquitous Madame Knight. The house at which she stopped near the ford, she writes, was "enclosed with clapboards—so much asunder that the light came through everywhere; the door tyed on with a cord in ye place of hinges; the floor the bear earth; no windows

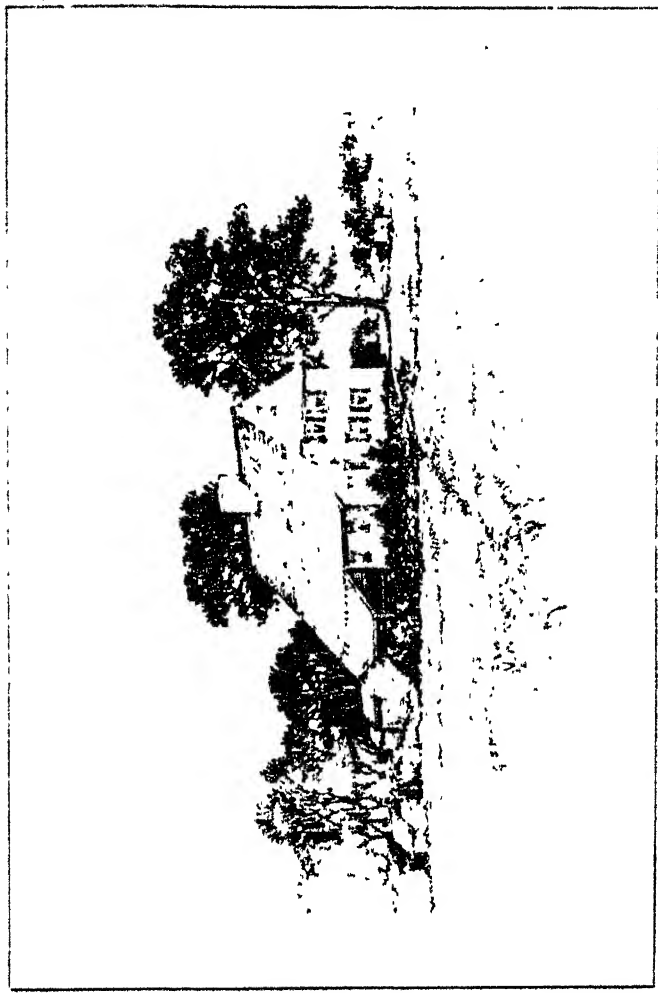
## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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but such as the thin covering afforded; nor any furniture but a bed, with a glass bottle hanging at ye head on't; an earthen cup; a small pewter basin; a box with sticks to stand on instead of a table; and a block or two in ye corner instead of chairs. . . . Notwithstanding, both the hutt and its inhabitants were very clean and tydee."

Stonington, Mystic, Groton, and New London are all old seaport towns, and though on or near the Post Road, even in the height of the coaching days they seem to have been more concerned with the business of shipbuilding and the sea than with the traffic of the road. Of Stonington, Dr. Dwight said that "all its vicinity suffers in religion from the nearness of Rhode Island"—that "filthy, nasty, dirty colony," as the *Boston Gazette* called it. To these incorrigible old New Englanders their own one and only brand of religion was ever unfailingly the best.

Something of the flavor of other days still lingers about Old Lyme (namesake of Lyme Regis on the Devon coast), long a favorite with artists. Here a little summer colony, mostly of New Yorkers, has grown up during the past fifty years or more. Their cottages and studios straggle along the road to the old ferry, now replaced by the modern bridge over the Connecticut, their gardens overlooking the marshes bordering the Lieutenant River. The tall spire of the old white church with its graceful columned portico still dominates the elm-shaded village street, along which are many dignified old mansions built by prosperous citizens of days gone by. The artists hold their many



*Starr House, 1665, Guilford, Conn.*





## The Lower Post Road

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exhibitions in an attractive modern gallery not far up the street. From the hanging balcony overlooking the shady pool behind, there is an enchanting view of a little tree-clad ravine. And although to some of us the wares exhibited in the gallery may seem quite incomprehensible and a poor substitute for the fine landscapes and dignified portraits of former years, they make some strange appeal to many of the present-day visitors. The one-story white schoolhouse is an altogether charming modern building quite in keeping with the early New England flavor of the old town.

Across the mouth of the Connecticut is Saybrook, another of Connecticut's historic old towns. The village street leads down to the river with its yacht club and many trim motor boats and sailing yachts at anchor, and beyond, a far view across to the opposite shore and up and down the long reaches of the river, with an occasional slow-moving barge or tank steamer on its way to Hartford.

Beyond Saybrook and all the way to Kingsbridge and the crowded outskirts of New York is a succession of towns whose many famous inns were stopping places for the coaches on the road. Most of these places bear English names, some of them famous on the great roads out of London. Seventeen miles beyond Saybrook is Guilford, reminiscent of the famous English Guildford on the Portsmouth road.

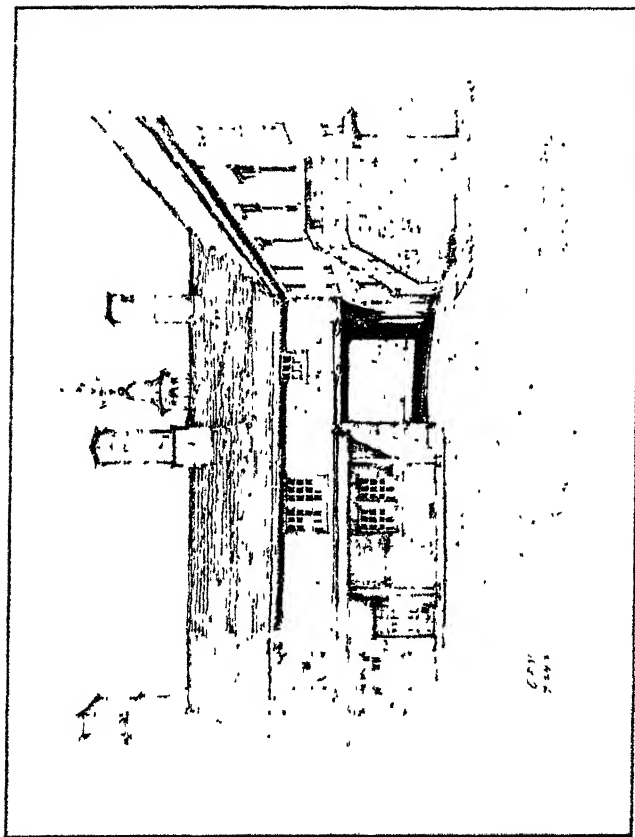
It was on the road not many miles beyond Guildford that an event took place of which we have so spirited an account that I am going to quote it at length:

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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“‘It happened [said the old coachman] that when he was driving . . . there were two other day-coaches. . . . They would sometimes in the middle of a journey all get together, as they did one day, when, on returning, he overtook the other coaches at the Anchor Inn at Liphook, where they changed horses and dined. The coachmen asked him what time he intended to get to Portsmouth that evening, to which he replied, ‘Much about the same as usual,’ and he then left.’

“But, alas! while this coachman, who had hitherto resisted temptation, was changing horses at the Wheatsheaf Inn half a mile out of the village, the other two coaches, who had changed at the Anchor, came by at a round trot, and shot out at him the tongue of the scorner. At this the blood of the old coachman boiled; in point of fact he said, ‘I will pursue,’ and he was fortified in this wicked determination by his fresh team being composed of four thoroughbred horses. He pursued accordingly, and soon came in sight of his rivals, one a little in advance of the other, and travelling as fast as they were able. Upon this the old coachman flung official directions and prudence to the winds and ‘sprang his cattle.’ Success soon rewarded this disregard for the safety of his passenger’s neck. He overtook the Regulator, which was the name of one of the rival coaches, as it was ascending Rake Hill. The Hero, however, which was the name of the other coach, he saw still about half-a-mile in front of him. Upon this, ‘he sprang his cattle’ more than ever, and the only passenger in his coach, a soldier, was tossed about on the roof like a shuttlecock on a battledore. This however was as nothing



*An English Inn*  
*(Courtyard of the Noel Arms, Chipping Campden)*



## The Lower Post Road

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in the old coachman's eyes, who could see nothing with them but his rival, and him he overtook on the top of Sheet Hill. The old coachman and the driver of the Hero now qualified for charioteers in the Roman chariot races . . . by driving their respective vehicles at full gallop down a steep and winding pitch. At the bottom of it they met a post-chaise returning from somewhere or other; but they did not heed it; the petrified post-boy only saved his neck by driving at full speed into a ditch. So far so good; especially as the old coachman now thought he saw the Hero beaten. He marked a place therefore in his mind's eye on the opposite rise where he might pass her comfortably; and when he came to the place he had marked, he came with a rush. The old coachman's leaders, answering to the call gamely, were already by the front wheels of the Hero, when what happened? Why, the driver of the Hero suddenly pulled his horses right across the old coachman's leaders' heads; who thus at the very moment that he thought he was going to snatch a victory, found himself driven up a bank. Fortunately no strap or trace, or buckle, was broken by this extremely ungentlemanly manoeuvre, or the old coachman would at the finish have been nowhere; but as it was he was never after able to get beyond the hind boot of the Hero, who won therefore at the Dolphin by a short length.

"Time—twenty minutes for the eight miles.

"Result of the race—three of the Hero's horses never came out of the stable again, and a complaint to the proprietors."

I wish I might claim this adventure for the New York road.

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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Honesty compels me to say, however, that it all took place on the *English* road between Guildford and Petersfield, as retold from Stanley Harris by W. Outram Tristram in his "Coaching Days and Coaching Ways," a delightful book, full of the incomparable drawings of Herbert Railton and Hugh Thomson, which gives one a better insight into Old England than any similar book I know: an England of unspoiled villages and of comfortable country squires, of parsons with fat livings, and of opulent baronets and dukes held up by gentlemen highwaymen on Hounslow Heath; in short an England which is gone forever.

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*The Lower Post Road (continued)*

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Let the world wagge, and take mine ease in myne Inne.

JOHN HEYWOOD, 1565

IN 1700, ten of the ministers of the Connecticut colony (seven of them, it is said, from towns on the Post Road) met at Branford with the intention of founding a college, each bringing books to form a library. The first commencement was held at Saybrook, in 1702, for it was not until 1717 that the first building was erected at New Haven. Endowments were received from Sir Isaac Newton and Bishop Burnet among others, but the first of a considerable sum came from Elihu Yale.

In early times in New Haven, the church, the courthouse, and the jail, with the stocks, the whipping post and pillory, were located around the green. Here was the marketplace, and here, in 1776, the people of New Haven assembled and broke out in rebellion on the arrival of Jared Ingersoll, the stamp agent, threatening the life of His Majesty's officer. Captain Benedict Arnold mustered his company of Guards here on the news from Lexington and started for Cambridge. Arnold had a chemist shop on Water Street, where, before the Revolution, he also sold books and stationery in addition to his business with the West India trade. His house stood until about the



## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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beginning of the present century. The Andrews tavern, which stood on the northwest corner of the Green, did a thriving business as a coaching inn.

After the Restoration in 1660 and the trial of the regicides, three of the fifty-nine judges who had signed Charles's death warrant, and who fled from the country, managed to escape to New England. Two of these, Colonel Edward Whalley, a cousin of Oliver Cromwell, and William Goffe, stayed for a while at Cambridge, where they were well received; but, feeling unsafe there, they went to New Haven. They had not been here long, however, before they were pursued by Crown officers with warrants for their arrest. Warning had been sent by sympathizers in Boston, and they hid from the officers in a cave high up on West Rock, a steep cliff overlooking the valley, where friends brought them food and other necessities. For months they led a hunted and wandering life, finally settling in Hadley, Massachusetts, where for fourteen years or longer they were in hiding in the house of the Reverend John Russell and elsewhere. During an Indian attack in King Philip's War, when the colonists were hard pressed, an old man suddenly appeared, who directed the defense and, when the Indians had been driven off, disappeared as mysteriously as he had come. Some thought that an angel in the form of the old man had been sent from Heaven. A few who had known Goffe believed that it was he who had been their deliverer.

Colonel Dixwell, another of the King's judges, later came to New Haven, and lived here as a retired merchant under the



*Morris Cove Light, New Haven, Conn.*



name of James Davids. He died in 1688, before his death disclosing his identity. It is said that Governor Andros once saw him in church and asked who he was, and being told that he had been a merchant, replied that that was not so, for it was evident from the gentleman's manner and appearance that he had held positions of importance and responsibility. Goffe and Whalley died in Hadley. When the Russell house was torn down a hundred and twenty years afterwards, in 1793, the bones of a man, believed to have been Whalley, and some bits of wood, were found under some flat stones in the old cellar. Dixwell is buried behind the Center Church, and two tablets in the rear wall of the church commemorate Goffe and Whalley.

The Reverend Ezra Stiles, president of Yale, wrote "A History of Three of the Judges of King Charles I," published in 1794, which he dedicated "to all the patrons of real, perfect and unpolluted liberty. . . . The enlightened, upright and intrepid judges of Charles I will hereafter go down to posterity with increasing renown, among the Jephthas, the Baraks, the Gideons and the Washingtons, and others raised up by providence for great and momentous occasions." Stiles was an ardent republican, and like most good republicans of both England and America he had keenly enjoyed the spectacle of the trial and execution of a king. Yet Macaulay wrote, "In no long time it became manifest that those political and religious zealots, to whom this deed is to be ascribed, had committed, not a crime, but an error"; and as the executioner lifted the head to the sight of the thousands of spectators before the scaffold outside one of

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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the windows of his own palace at Whitehall on that winter morning, "a groan of pity and horror burst from the silent crowd"; and there are still some to be found who like to speak of King Charles the Martyr, and remember the 30th of January by wearing a white rose.

The New Haven and Milford Turnpike, built in 1802, crossed the West River by the old West Bridge. There had been a foot or cart bridge here since 1639. Beyond the bridge the turnpike followed the old Milford Path.

Just off the Post Road, Milford is a residential community with some old houses around a long, narrow, elm-shaded green. Washington's stopping place was the Clark Tavern, which still stands in Main Street. The so-called Stockade House faces the green, and one or two other old houses of interest still remain.

The charm of Milford centers about its two churches which stand on either bank of the river. That on the west bank is perhaps well described as being, both within and without, "of the best period of Connecticut church architecture," which is perhaps all that it is necessary to say. No doubt ancestors of the present congregation were among those who, with that complacency in matters of religion so characteristic of our forebears, voted "that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; Voted, that the earth is given to Saints; Voted, that we are the Saints."

Two famous post-riders of the old road were Andrew and Ebenezer Hurd of Stratford. Ebenezer rode between New York and Saybrook for fifty-six years before the Revolution, making

## The Lower Post Road

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the round trip once a fortnight. Stratford is now a residential suburb of Bridgeport, with many old houses. The David Judson house, now occupied by the Stratford Historical Society, has some good paneling, and in the cellar are two Dutch ovens, with a great fireplace for cooking.

In 1801 a post office was opened at Bridgeport. The four-horse mail coach arrived from New York between eight and ten in the evening, "according to the condition of the roads," its arrival announced by the sound of the guard's horn as they entered the village. At the corner of Cook's Lane, now Grove Street, is a house probably the oldest in Bridgeport, built in 1693 for the town's first minister, the Reverend Charles Chauncey, a grandson of the Harvard president, and his wife, Sara Burr. Bridgeport was long the home of P. T. Barnum, born not far away in Bethel, in 1810. Here he built an extraordinary house in what he evidently believed to be an Oriental style, which he called "Iranistan." He afterwards had two others in Bridgeport, and here for many years were the winter quarters of the Greatest Show on Earth, and the training place for numbers of his troupe. Ever a great benefactor of his native city, he served it as mayor and representative to the Assembly: "a staunch and patriotic citizen."

The Pixley Tavern, or Harpin's, a famous house of the old days, still stands at the corner of Boston Avenue and East Main Street, not many years ago a weather-beaten, shingled structure, but now, alas, covered with yellow stucco. Built in 1700 by William Pixley, it was occupied by six generations of the same

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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name. Washington was here several times, when he occupied the northwest bedroom.

In the summer of 1779 this part of the coast along the Sound suffered constant attacks from Tryon's raiding parties. Fairfield was burnt, and at New Haven and Norwalk and various other places on or near the shore there was much destruction of property by various landing parties of the British. The German "yagers" at Fairfield were particularly brutal, smashing furniture and crockery and insulting women—Whigs and Tories alike. How familiar it all sounds! From the many creeks and coves, particularly about the mouth of the Byram River at the New York State line, parties of sailors and fishermen from the coast villages would come out in their whaleboats to harry passing British vessels carrying supplies to the troops in New York; occasionally making sudden descents upon the Long Island Tories across the Sound. Many a trim ketch or more clumsy pinkie lay safely tied up at a snug berth by the shore of some little cove or inlet or salt-water creek that twisted and turned on its way through the marshes to empty into this part of the Sound; and many cargoes of little kegs or strongly bound boxes had been landed on the beach on a dark night by their crews; cargoes easily disposed of to those who saw no reason for paying his Majesty's excise tax when it could so easily be avoided. What easier than to make sudden landings across the Sound to annoy the Tories on Long Island?

Fairfield still retains many of its early characteristics around the "Village" and Meetinghouse greens. Part of the jail once

108

## The Lower Post Road

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was used as a tavern with a public bar; no doubt a convenient arrangement at times, until when, in 1844, a state law prohibited it. The Sun, a new house in Washington's day, still stands on the former location of the Post Road, the old King's Highway.

Five or six miles farther along the road, at Westport, an old stage tavern, probably about a hundred years old, not many years ago was still standing at the foot of the hill near the bridge. This was a relay house in the coaching days. Peat Swamp, between here and Norwalk, had a bad reputation as a lurking-place for doubtful characters who would not be above a holdup and mail robbery.

Another mile or two and we are in Norwalk, now an industrial town spreading out on both sides of the Norwalk River. The Norwalk Hotel, once the Connecticut House, newly built in Washington's time, was an important inn with patrons of the coaches. The President recorded that "we made a halt at Norwalk to feed our Horses. . . . From thence to Fairfield, where we dined and lodged, is twelve miles; and part of it a very rough Road, but not equal to that thro' Horse Neck. The superb Landscape, however, which is to be seen from the meeting-house of the latter is a rich regalia." A remark to be noted, by the way, for at that time beauty of landscape was little appreciated. He comments on the "destructive evidences" of the British in Norwalk and Fairfield.

It was to Norwalk that Nathan Hale came in 1776 to start on his secret mission into the British lines. Here he said goodbye to Sergeant John Hempstead who was with him, and was taken



## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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across the Sound by Captain Pound in his sloop *Schuyler*, landing at Huntington on Long Island. On the afternoon of September 22nd, Captain Montresor of the British army, under a flag of truce, brought word of Hale's execution that morning.

The land between the Saugatuck and Norwalk rivers was bought from the Indians in 1640 for "8 fathom wampum," 6 coats and a few knives and other tools, with "10 seizers," "10 juseharps," and 10 looking glasses (for the squaws?). Later Captain Daniel Patrick of Greenwich bought "all the land adjoininge to the aforementioned, as far up in the Country as an indian can goe in a day, from sun risinge to sun settinge." Thirty-eight years later in May, 1678, "it was voted and agreed to hier a schole master to teach all the childring in the towne to learn to Reade and write; & that Mr. Cornish shall be hierd for that service & the townsmen are to hier him upon as reasonable terms as they can." Evidently they thought it was time the rising generation learned to spell, though it may be inferred that this was to be only if the terms were reasonable.

Though, we fear, without due cause, Norwalk makes claim for one of its citizens as the inventor of the derby hat, always associated, as we had believed, with the English horse race of that name. It seems that the expensive beavers, costing, we are told, the large sum of seven dollars and expected to wear a lifetime, were inclined to wear out on the edges of the crown before they had served out the allotted threescore years and ten of their owners. Hence the invention by one Knapp of Norwalk, of the time-serving and more enduring bean-pot derby,

## The Lower Post Road

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made on a rounded block, and a new and prosperous industry was established in Norwalk.

In Stamford, in the early nineteenth century, a famous inn (or was it a "hotel" by that time?) stood at the southeast corner of Main Street and Relay Place: a house which remained in business for nearly a hundred years. Once a regular relay house for the New York and Boston stages, its memory survives today only in the name.

Soon after the town's settlement, with that pleasing sentiment of malice towards all and charity for none ever prevalent in dealing with religious matters of the time, the town issued an order against "the cursed sect of heretics lately risen in the world which are commonly called quakers." About this time, two Quakers "Came yt Evneing to a town Caled Stamford in Conacktecok Colny—it being a prety large bvt dark town; not a frind living in all yt provence;—they being all Rigid prespetrions or independents . . . so we went to an Inn. I asked ye woman of ye hows if yt she would be willing to sufer a meeting to be in her hows. She said yes, she would not deny no sivil Company from coming to her hows . . . and therfor I sent those frinds yt war with us to go and invite ye peopel to come to our Inn, for we were of those people Caled qoekers, and we had something to say to them."

Stamford is now a manufacturing city with outlying suburbs with the estates of some well-to-do New York commuters.

There was a tollgate in Greenwich on what is still known as Tollgate Hill. In 1655 the people of Stamford complained that

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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Greenwich was too free and easy in its laws and manners. It seems that the place had become a sort of Gretna Green for eloping couples, a refuge for fugitive slaves and indentured servants, and that there was much drunkenness among the Dutch and Indians as well as the English. Captain Hobby's house, scene of General Putnam's exploit, was on the Post Road. It is said, by the way, that some of the inhabitants of Greenwich have a somewhat different idea of Putnam's conduct from that popularly held as the tale is usually told. At any rate, the hill near the Episcopal church presents a different appearance from what it did on the morning in February, 1779, when Putnam made his leap into fame.

"About four in the morning," wrote Madame Sarah Knight, "we set out . . . with a french Doctor in our company. Hee and y<sup>e</sup> Post put on very furiously, so that I could not keep up with them, only as now and then they'd stop till they see mee.

"From hence we hasted towards Rye, walking and Leading our Horses neer a mile together, up a prodigios high Hill; and so riding till about nine at night and there arrived and took up our Lodgings at an Ordinary w<sup>ch</sup> a French family kept." Having "riss" about three in the morning and "discharged" their ordinary, "w<sup>ch</sup> was as dear as if we had had Better Fare, wee took our leave of Monsier and about seven in the morn came to New Rochell a french town, where we had a good Breakfast And in strength of that about an how'r before sunsett got to (New) York."

On the Post Road, at its junction with Purchase Street in

## The Lower Post Road

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Rye, is the house once Haviland's Inn or "Penfield's," at one time used as the town hall. It was a tavern as early as 1731; later Dr. Ebenezer Haviland, a surgeon in the Continental army, became its landlord. After Haviland was killed in the war, his widow carried on the business. John Adams stopped here on his way to the Continental Congress in 1774, and Washington wrote in his diary of Mrs. Haviland, "who keeps a very neat and decent inn. The Road for the greater part, indeed the whole way was very rough and stony. . . . The distance of this day's travel was 31 miles." Lafayette was here on his way to Boston in 1824, when he occupied Washington's room. Later the house was kept by the Penfields, father and son. It was the stopping place for the Boston stages. In 1903 the old house narrowly escaped destruction, when the owner, a local builder, was about to demolish it; but three public-spirited gentlemen of Rye stepped in and bought it with the intention of making it a museum of colonial and other historic relics.

Madame Knight, on that adventurous journey of hers to New York in 1704, wrote in her diary of New Rochelle: "We had good entertainment, and recruited ourselves very well. This is a very pretty place, well compact, and good, handsome houses, clean, good and passable roads, and situated on a navigable river, which caused in me a love to the place, which I could have been content to live in it. Here we rid over a bridge made of one entire stone, of such a breadth that a cart might pass with safety, and to spare . . . Here are three fine taverns within call of each other, and very good provision for travellers." Madame

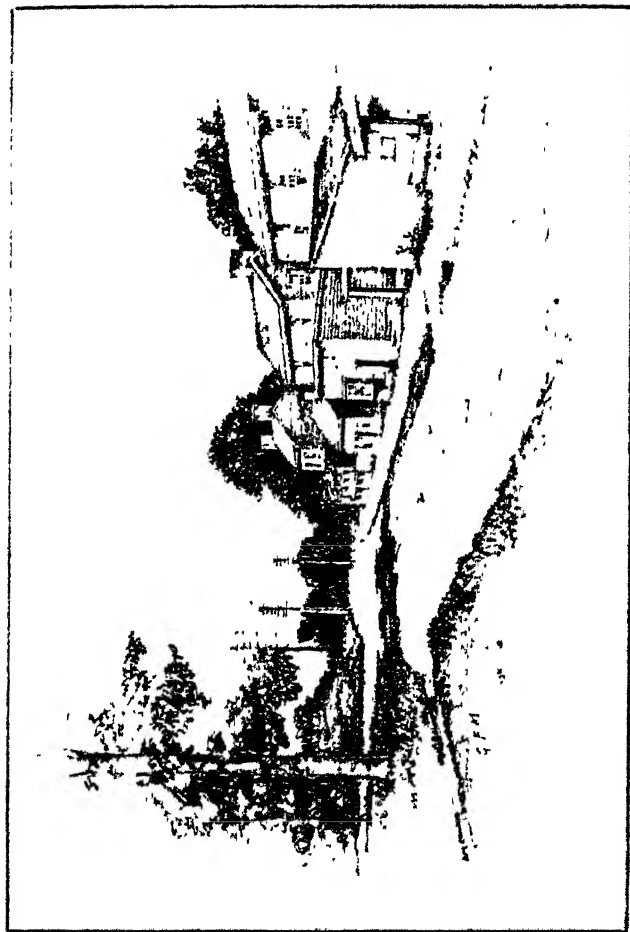
## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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Sarah was by no means always so well pleased with her lodging.

Dr. Dwight of Yale, traveling the same road a little over a hundred years later, seems not to have enjoyed this part of his journey so much, for he wrote: "Amid all this appearance of desolation, nothing struck my eye more forcibly than the sight of this great road, the passage from New York to Boston. Where I had heretofore seen a continual succession of horses and carriages, and life and bustle lent a sprightliness to all environing objects, not a single solitary traveller was visible from week to week, or from month to month . . . The very tracks of the carriages were grown over and obliterated; and where they were discernible, resembled the faint impressions of chariot wheels, said to be left on the pavements of Herculaneum." What might the Doctor have said of the results of still another century and a quarter?

Beyond Pelham Manor, across Eastchester Creek, were two famous old taverns on the Turnpike. Fisher's Lane still recalls the name of Hannah Fisher, reputed to have been a good-natured person of large frame and great strength, who could lift a barrel of cider and drink from the bunghole. Dickert's Old Point Comfort Hotel, built as late as 1876, was on the site of a house of a time soon after the Revolution, which became a tavern in the early nineteenth century. Later it passed into the hands of James Armstrong, an Englishman, and his widow. The Armstrongs had the reputation of "setting the best table" between New York and Boston. Lafayette was entertained here on his New England trip in 1824.



*Old Houses on the Post Road, Bronx, 1903  
(Now demolished)*



## The Lower Post Road

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Nearly all of these towns along the Sound bear the English names given them by their early settlers, recalling memories of the old seaport towns along the coast from whence they came. Many of them are names once famous on some of the great roads out of London. Until the time of the great increase in motor traffic after the last war, they still retained a good deal of their old-time rural aspect, but with the increase in traffic and rebuilding of the roads much of their picturesque and rural atmosphere has departed, and soon after crossing the state line between Greenwich and Port Chester we had begun to enter the crowded suburbs of New York.

A famous house on the Post Road was Cato's, built in 1712, between the present Forty-first and Fifty-second streets. Cato had been a negro slave, who had attained such skill in the art of cooking that he had earned enough to buy his freedom from his South Carolina master. He kept the house for nearly fifty years, and those who had tasted his okra soup or curried oysters, his terrapin, fried chicken or roast duck, or had drunk his brandy or South Carolina milk punch or Virginia eggnog, wondered how anyone who owned him could ever have consented to part with him. Cato added a ballroom to the house where thirty couples could dance; a favorite resort for sleighing parties at Christmas time and New Year's, when Cato's eggnog was mixed by the barrellful. "He knew precisely the mystic time when the separated white and yolk was beaten enough, he knew the exact modicum of sugar, he could count with precision the grains of nutmeg that should fleck the compound, he could top



## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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to exactness the white egg foam." An old print of the house, made no doubt in its declining days, shows it as a small and rather ramshackle structure, with two-story porch and balcony and low wings on either side, set among scraggy trees with a decrepit fence and gate in front.

In 1730 the Black Horse Tavern became the New York starting point for the Boston Post. This was before the days of the regular stage lines, but in the early part of the eighteenth century the house, kept by Robert Todd, was the genteel tavern of the town. It stood in William Street, then known as Smith Street, between Pine and Cedar, and many elegant balls and other gatherings took place between its walls. Here on the 19th of January, 1736, a ball was given on the Prince of Wales's birthday, when the healths of George II, the Governor, and Council were drunk—"an elegant entertainment," the ladies being said to be "magnificent." The place was noted for its delectable beverages, largely composed of choice West India rum. After Todd's death, the house was carried on by his widow, who had a flair for the trade, and besides sold fine wines wholesale; but after the middle of the century, its prosperity began to wane.

On Pearl Street was the City Tavern, where, in 1789, the Tammany Society was organized and held its early meetings—originally actually a sort of successor to the Sons of Liberty. Later it moved to the old Tammany Hall on Park Row, afterwards occupied by the New York *Sun*, and here Fitz-Greene Halleck tells us:

## The Lower Post Road

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There's a barrel of porter at Tammany Hall  
And the bucktails are swigging it all the night long;  
In the time of my boyhood, 'twas pleasant to call  
For a seat and cigar, 'mid the jovial throng.

Though ever, ostensibly at least, a supporter of the Democratic party, all has not always been peace and tranquillity within the Wigwam. In 1835, during Jackson's second term, when a meeting was called to ratify the Democratic nominations for the coming campaign, there was much opposition to the list of candidates. The secessionists, amid scenes of great confusion, drove the opposition from the hall, when someone thoughtfully turned off the gas—not an unusual occurrence on such occasions. The antis, however, had provided themselves with candles, and returning to the hall, organized their convention and made their own nominations.

John Trumbull is said to have suggested the name of St. Tammany, originating from the legends of the famous Indian chief Tamanende, whose "wisdom, humanity and many virtues" had earned him the title.

Originally the members of this unique organization had been among the older and more respectable citizens of the city, but with the registration law of 1840 the right of suffrage was greatly enlarged. An organized political society attracted younger and more ambitious men, and the older men gradually withdrew. Then followed the regime of the one-time chair-maker "Boss" Tweed and his former clerk and henchman Richard Croker.

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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At the height of the coaching business, the City Hotel, on the site of the famous Province Arms (not to be confused with the City Tavern), became the great New York house. It stood on Broadway, between Thames and Cedar streets, two or three blocks above the Battery, and travelers said it had no equal in the United States. An old view shows it as a plain brick building of four stories and attics, with pairs of end chimneys rising above the sloping roofs—a type characteristic of the period, and still to be seen in a few of the older parts of New York and Boston. In the view, taken from an old blue plate, some men are sawing wood in Broadway. The house's furnishings are said to have been plain but substantial, the waiters numerous and well trained, and there was a "lady's dining room" where dances, lectures, and concerts were given. Truly a precursor of the modern hotel. The proprietors of this highly genteel and respectable establishment were two bachelors, Jennings and Willard. It was said that Willard was never away from his post as host, clerk, bookkeeper, and cashier, and it was commonly reported that he never went to bed. When one Billy Niblo opened an uptown coffee house and garden, he invited Willard to the housewarming. To Willard, two streets away from City Hall was a strange city, and it was discovered that for years he had never owned a hat: a deficiency which might have been overlooked today. Jennings attended to matters of the dining room and all relations with the external world, and both had the perfect memory for faces, names, and details of the successful landlord.

## The Lower Post Road

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Here, within sight of the Battery, where our first post-rider set out with his mailbags, we shall leave our travelers for a good night's rest. And if, outdoing Rip Van Winkle, they had slept for fifty or a hundred years instead of twenty, most astounded would they have been when they stepped out into Broadway the next morning.

## VI

### *The Groton, Keene, and Hanover Road*

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The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day:  
Now spurs the lated traveller apace  
To gain the timely inn . . .

SHAKESPEARE, *Macbeth*

A GREAT stage route of the old days was that over the Concord road to Groton and on through Fitzwilliam, Keene, and other New Hampshire towns to Hanover. As early as 1793 we find "A Stage-Carriage drives from Robbins' tavern at Charles River Bridge on Monday and Friday in each week." Later other New Hampshire coaches left from Boyden's, Bromfield Lane, and from Barnard's and Wilde's in Elm Street. Going over the bridge into Charlestown we would have seen on the left Lechemere's Point, now East Cambridge, and where the courthouse stands, Lord Lechemere's brother, Surveyor-General Thomas Lechemere, had his farm. Richard Lechemere, a royalist refugee, had married a daughter of Lieutenant Governor Spencer Phips, and by her had inherited "Phips' Farm," as the Point was sometimes called. Here was the site of one of Washington's batteries.

It was at a point near the old quarry on the northerly side of the Cambridge road (now Washington Street) that Captain

## The Groton, Keene, and Hanover Road

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John Codman's colored servant Mark was hanged in chains for the murder of his master. Mark and two women, Phillis and Phoebe, described as "favorite domestics," had poisoned him with arsenic, afterwards burning the house and other buildings to cover up the crime. Phillis was burned at the stake at the place of execution in Cambridge, but Phoebe turned State's evidence and got off with deportation to the West Indies.

Mary Caroline Crawford gives us an account of this interesting event written by a Boston gentleman who was present: "Execution day a clear but for the time of year a Cold day about 1 o'clock sat out for Cambridge saw ye execution Mark hanged and Phillis burn then to Bradishes, & then to morses drank some punch with Mr. Morley Tom Leverett Mr. Cooper Tom foxcroft Ned Emerson & others & walked down with Jonathan Bradish and then to mr. Moreleys house tarried till ten supped & refreshed nature sufficiently and then went home and went to bed & slept woke up very finely refreshed."

Nothing, judging by contemporaneous accounts, was so refreshing to these hard-boiled citizens as a first-rate hanging or burning. The Nazis have little on our own Puritan ancestors when it comes to such affairs; they merely do it on a bigger and better scale.

The gibbet where Mark was hanged remained until the time of the Revolution, and Paul Revere mentioned the spot as being the point where he was intercepted by a British patrol. It stood near Porter's Tavern. The old house whose name has gone down to posterity as the name of a steak, is gone, and I believe

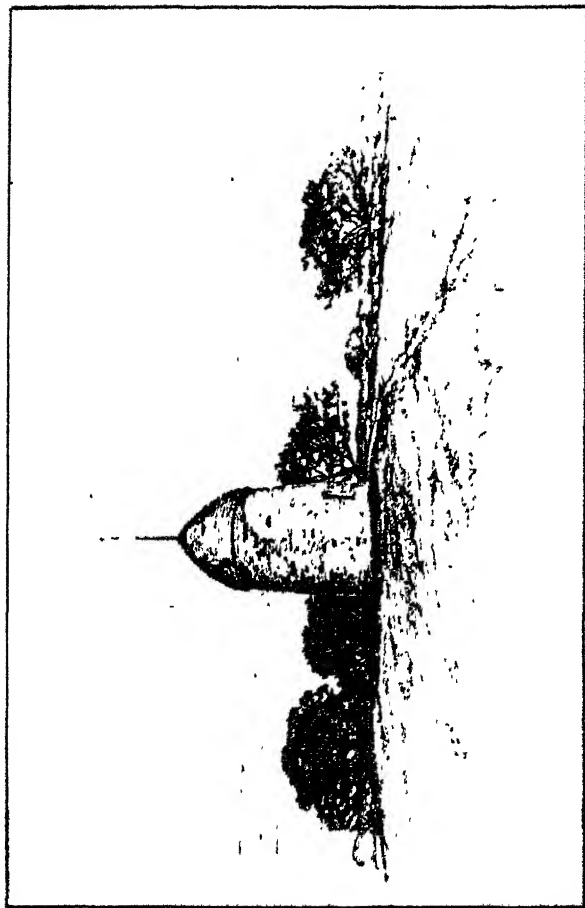
## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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near-by Porter's Station on the Boston & Maine is now known merely as Cambridge station.

Near the corner of College Avenue on the way to Arlington we shall pass the Old Powder House. It stands in a little wooded park on the hilltop, surrounded by tall trees today, rising above outcropping ledges. Dating from Queen Anne's reign, it was originally a gristmill, probably built about 1704 by John Mallet. For a quarter of a century, perhaps, it was used as a mill. The miller lived in a farmhouse on the roadside near by, and sacks of corn were brought here to be ground, by Middlesex and Essex farmers on horseback from miles around. Early in the eighteenth century, however, the structure ceased to be used as a mill, the erection of water wheels on numerous streams probably providing nearer and more efficient means of grinding. Henceforth it was used for the storage of powder. Early on the morning of the 1st of September, 1774, two hundred and sixty British soldiers left Long Wharf in boats, by order of General Gage, and rowing up the Mystic, landed within a mile of the magazine, going off with two hundred and fifty half-barrels of powder. The next morning several thousand people from near-by towns gathered on Cambridge Common, apparently the first armed assembly of the Revolution.

The old magazine was used until the middle of the last century, when, with the farm on which it stood, it was sold to Nathan Tufts, whose heirs, in cooperation with the Somerville city authorities, secured its preservation for all time, together with the surrounding land.



*Old Powder House, Somerville, Mass.  
(As it looked about 1900)*





## The Groton, Keene, and Hanover Road

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The building is of stone with an inner lining of brick—together about two feet thick. In early days, before the encroachment of Somerville and Cambridge streets, the old tower must have been a prominent landmark, on the high land overlooking the Mystic and Charles river valleys, with a view of the “pretty town with a college built of brick,” while to the west, towards Lexington, lay the farms along the road to Concord.

A pretty story has attached itself to the old mill, for the truth of which we cannot vouch:

In the darkness of a November evening in the time of the miller Mallet, a young man wrapped in a long traveling cloak rode up to the farmhouse door as the family sat at supper. By the steaming horse it was evident that he had ridden far and hard. Mallet, who is described as the proverbial “jolly miller,” sent his son to the stable with the horse and invited the boy in to share their supper. He seemed shy, however, and ate but little, and soon withdrew to the darkest corner of the room. Working people went to bed early in those days, and taking a candle, the miller led the way up the attic stairs, offering the boy a share of his son’s bed. To his surprise and ill concealed disgust, the stranger objected to this and begged to be allowed to sit by the kitchen fire. This the miller refused, however, saying if a bed with his son was not good enough for him, he might sleep with the rats in the mill. The boy seemed glad to do this, and throwing himself down on a pile of empty bags, soon fell asleep. Presently he was awakened by a clamor of voices outside, the miller apparently reluctantly unlocking the door. Several

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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men appeared in the flickering light of a lantern, and seemingly moved by a sudden impulse, the boy drew up the ladder and climbed to the upper stage of the mill. "Ho there, Claudine," called a man who seemed to be the leader, "come down"; and "Miller, bring another ladder." The miller brought one, and the man hastily climbed to the upper staging. Meanwhile the boy crouched in a corner, the man groping about in the darkness in an effort to find him. Suddenly, with a scream for help, the boy rushed for the ladder, when the man made a quick movement, missed his footing, and fell headlong through the opening in the floor. In a frantic effort to break his fall he clutched at a dangling rope, when with a yell of horror the miller shouted, "Let go the cord!" In an instant the great arms of the mill began to turn, and the man, caught in the mechanism he had set in motion, was carried out, mangled and helpless, to the farmhouse. He uttered one word, "Claudine."

The "boy" was one of the unfortunate Acadians, some of whom, when expatriated in 1755, are said to have been parceled out among the inhabitants of various towns, like so many slaves. Claudine had fallen into the hands of a man who had tried to degrade her to the position of his mistress. She had managed to saddle her master's horse and get away, and looking for shelter for the night, had come to the mill. Some of these migrating French people are known to have settled in Framingham.

Though an important place on the road in early days, I think none of Arlington's old taverns remain. During the British retreat from Lexington, there was much skirmishing and snip-

ing from the houses here. On Massachusetts Avenue at the corner of Medford Street, afterwards the site of the Arlington House, was the Cooper Tavern, where "two aged citizens who had come, unarmed, simply to enquire the news, 'were most barbarously and inhumanly murdered by the British, being stabbed through in many places, their heads mauled, skulls broken and their brains dashed out on the floors and walls of the house.'"

The old Black Horse was on Massachusetts Avenue opposite Linwood Street, where the Committee of Safety and Supplies of the Provincial Congress met on the day before the battle, and here, on the day of the fight, Vice President Gerry and two provincial officers barely escaped capture by a party of the British. The Jason Russell house still stands on Jason Street, now occupied by the Arlington Historical Society. Built in 1680, this is one of the earliest houses in the vicinity. Some of the Minutemen, overcome by numbers and cut off, took cover here. A few who went to the cellar escaped, but Jason Russell and some others were killed.

Many stories of the day have been handed down. Dr. Eliphalet Downer, who had come from Punch Bowl Village in Brookline, had a bayonet combat with one of the British soldiers which Downer ended with the butt of his musket.

Downer had a subsequent career of adventure. While he was surgeon on an American privateer, prisoners got control of the vessel and landed him with others of the crew in an English prison. Released, and again captured at sea, he found himself

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

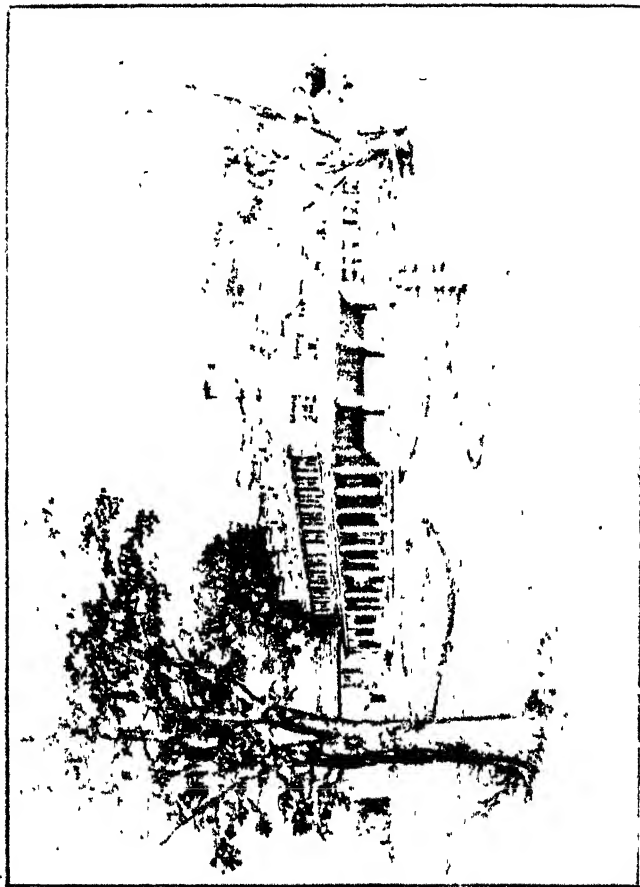
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in Portsea Prison. With some other prisoners he escaped by tunneling under the walls, their principal tool being a jack-knife. The doctor was a heavy man, and when his turn came he stuck in the passage. At last getting away, he reached France, and returned to America to serve as surgeon-general on the unfortunate Penobscot expedition. It was not without reason that Dr. Downer was described as "an active, enterprising man."

Accounts of the Revolutionary taverns at Lexington are perhaps too familiar to repeat. The Munroe Tavern, built in 1695, and Buckman's, in 1690, are well known today. Captain Parker's company assembled at Buckman's on the day of the battle, and from here some of the Minutemen fired on the British. Bullet holes from their return fire are still to be seen. Percy reached the Munroe Tavern with some of his reinforcements early in the afternoon, and here one of his men ruthlessly shot an old man, a member of the family, as he tried to leave the house. The Hancock-Clarke house (1698) is now occupied by the Lexington Historical Society.

It was about halfway between Lexington and Concord that Dawes lost his watch, when he and Dr. Samuel Prescott were held up by the British officers. Billy Dawes pulled up so short that he fell off his horse, though he got away. Going over the ground a few days later he found the watch. If it was damaged by the fall, no doubt Paul Revere, who could do anything, from repairing or making a set of false teeth to casting bells, was able to put it in order again.

At Concord, we find another of the fraternity of tavern



*Groton Inn, Groton, Mass.*



## The Groton, Keene, and Hanover Road

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keepers of the good Welsh name of Jones, for here Captain Ephraim about 1747 opened the famous Revolutionary inn that stands today as the Wright Tavern. Amos Wright took it as landlord in the year of the battle, though he was preceded by Munroe of Lexington; so three famous tavern keepers' names have been associated with the house. Here it was that Major Pitcairn, according to tradition, "stirred his brandy with his bloody finger." The old house is still open as a hotel.

For some reason or other we hear little of stage houses in Concord, though in 1656 the General Court had imposed a fine upon towns not supporting an ordinary, and Concord was one of these.

"At early dusk on some October or November evening, in the year 1794," wrote Nathan Appleton, "a fresh, vigorous, bright-eyed lad, just turned of fifteen, might have been seen alighting from a stage-coach near Quaker Lane [now Congress St.], as it was then called in the old town of Boston. He had been two days on the road from his home in the town of New Ipswich, in the State of New Hampshire. On the last of the two days the stage-coach had brought him all the way from Groton in Massachusetts; starting for that purpose early in the morning, stopping at Concord for the passengers to dine, trundling them through Charlestown about the time the evening lamps were lighted, and finishing the whole distance of rather more than thirty miles in season for supper." His first day's journey had been made in an even less comfortable conveyance—it was not until 1820 that stages ran beyond Groton.



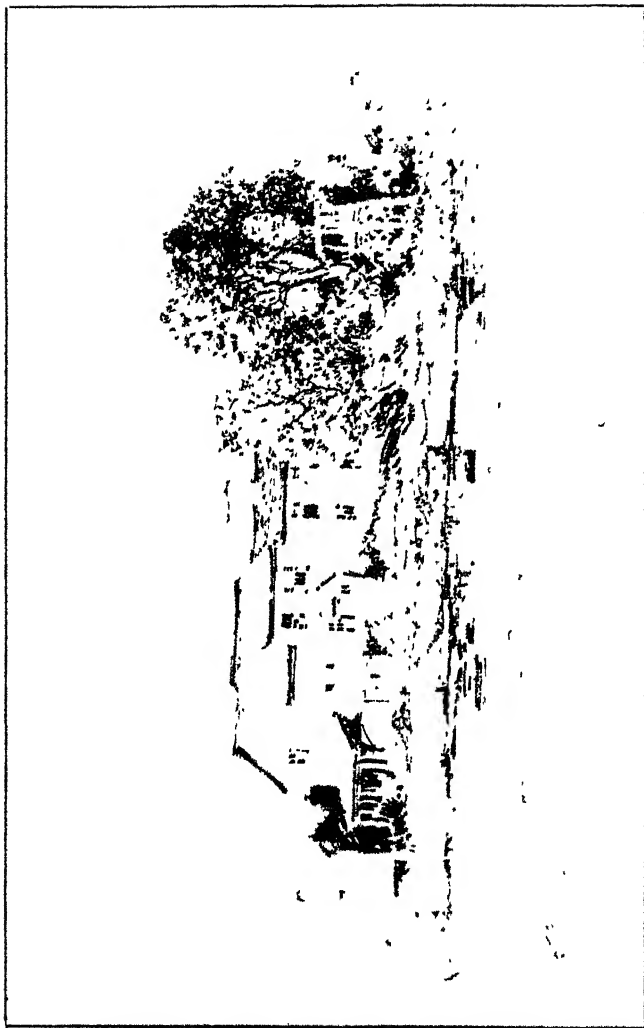
## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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Mrs. Earle writes of the schoolboys of the coaching days. At the end of term and when they came back to school the tops of the coaches were piled high with their boxes. "On these boxes and within the coach swarmed the boys, pea-shooters in hand. A favorite target was the pike-keeper at the toll-gate, and those who left the coach first fared worst." And over this road today come still other schoolboys, some of them great-grandsons, I dare say, of those of a hundred years or more ago. They come at a faster pace and with other ways of enjoying themselves, but with habits and dispositions much the same as those who came before them.

Rising above the trees beyond green fields, a mile or more from the village of Groton, we can see the tower of the beautiful chapel of the school where these fortunate sons of a later generation get their education amid surroundings which would have surprised those of the earlier days, when sons of well-to-do families had to provide their own firewood and even the pail in which they carried the hot water for a weekly bath from the kitchen below, glad to get it.

Groton is fortunate today in the possession of a fine old inn, a part of which dates from a time before the Revolution. Excellently preserved, it is an impressive old house facing the village street, and though some of its old stables and other dependencies have disappeared, it may perhaps be taken as fairly typical of the more important coaching inns of the time when the business of the road was at its height. The town was on an important road from Boston through New Hampshire and



*Old Buildings on the Concord River*



## The Groton, Keene, and Hanover Road

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Vermont to Canada, and it is said that as many as forty great four- or six-horse wagons often passed through the village in a day: on the down trip laden with country produce; bringing back products of the workshops and articles on sale in the stores of Boston or the surrounding towns.

In the Groton records of the French and Indian War in 1758 we find an order to Captain Thomas Lawrance, "to acquaint the Taverners" that his men are to be "Victualed as follows—that is Sixpence Pr day Sterling & no more. you are to take care they don't Exceed that and also Such a part for each meal as to take the whole of s<sup>d</sup> Sixpence for the day." An unnecessary admonition, one might think.

Few of the early New England settlers passed through more trying and dangerous times during the Indian wars than those at Groton. In a number of cases they had paid the Indians for the land after having received grants from the Crown, thinking thus to make good their claims—by no means a universal practice. No doubt the poor Indian was badly gypped, however. The present township of Danbury, Connecticut, about 30,000 acres, is said to have been "purchased" in 1687 for a bag of beans. In the Groton records we find:

"At a ginerall Town meting upon 25d 10m 1683 John Page, John Parish, Insin Lorinc

"as you are Chosin a comity for and in behalf of the Town you are desiered for to proue the Rit and titill we haue to our Toown ship by all the legall testimony which can be procurid when the Toown is sent too by aney a Tority and if aney ingins

can proue a legiall titall too the Remainer of our Town ship you haue power too by it as easi a lay as you can and mack it as sur as may be in the behalf of the Toown and you shall haue Reasinable satisfacksiõ for your payns.

"14d 11m 1683 at a ginnrall Toown meting it was agred upon and uoted that this publick chargis con sarning the purchis of our Toown ship shall be rayed by the furst grants and to hom thay war furst granted too."

And accordingly "Mr. John Tom Dublit & his wife & their Eldest son little Jame ffox, alias Gasumbitt" and other "ingins" "granted, bargained, & sold, aliened enfeoffed & confirmed—to the Inhabitants of the Towne of Grotton" for about one hundred and forty dollars all the land on both sides of the Nashua River then comprised in the town.

These and other equally remarkable documents bear witness to a spirit of fairness and honesty in dealing with the Indians all too rare then, as well as a pleasant freedom from all embarrassing rules of the standardized spelling of later times.

There being no surgeon in the settlement, the following order was sent to the Constable of Boston:

"These Require you in his Majestys name forthwith to Impresse Mr W<sup>m</sup> Haukins chirurgeon: Immediately to prepare himself w<sup>th</sup> materials as chirurgeon & to dispatch to Marlbury to Capt Mosely & attend his motion & soldiers at Groaten. or elsewhere: for wch End you are also to Impresse an able horse & furniture for him: to Goe: w<sup>th</sup> the post

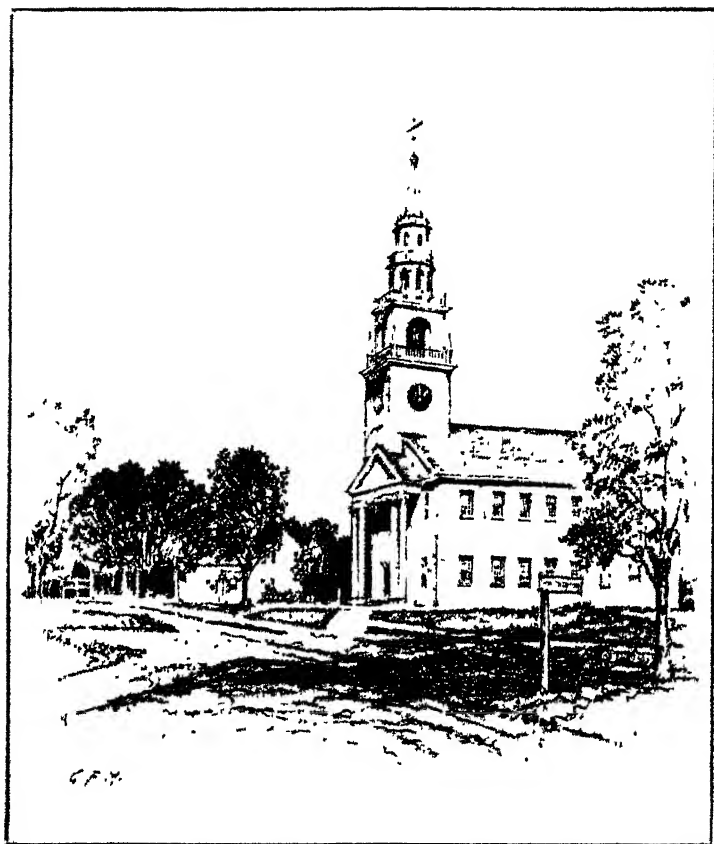
"Dated at Boston 17<sup>th</sup> August 1675 making Return hereof to the Secrety."

Though in his will Dr. Hawkins is styled a surgeon, genealogical records describe him as a butcher. An unfortunate combination of callings perhaps. Probably his time was too early for him to have attended Thomas Lawrance, who "in the Copasity of a Second Left" on the "Cenebeck Riuer" expedition "gaue His Back a sudden Rinch wich I often Feel the Effects of to this day and fear shall as Long as I live." Lawrance sent a "pertision" to "His Excelency William Shearly Esq<sup>r</sup> Cap<sup>t</sup> General and Commandder in Cheef" and to the "Counsel" and received £11, 10s, 7d.—little enough surely for a "Rinch" which he felt for the rest of his life. Lawrance is said to have been a better officer than speller.

The following tale, though in part fanciful, in the main adheres to actual facts and events in which Groton men took part.

At one of the taverns, towards the close of an autumn day some time before the Revolution, some of the villagers were gathered as usual in the evening "to talk over their little politicks—when they were surprised by the entrance of a young Indian. . . . An Indian at that time had got to be a rarity in P[etaupauket, that is, Groton]. He was tall, over six feet. . . . He had a belt of wampum around his waist, and from it hung a tomahawk. A long gun was in his hand, and he stood in moccasins with the grace and dignity of the son of a chief." Placing his gun behind the door, he silently took a seat in a corner by himself. A little before sunset the farmers left the

inn, all but one old hunter who stayed behind with the landlord and the Indian. The hunter eyed him, his suspicions aroused, for the Indian was far from any tribe, and armed, in a time of peace, and he had heard him ask the landlord if John Chamberlain lived in the village. The tavern keeper pointed out the mill and the cottage where Chamberlain lived and the Indian took his gun and went out. "Some of the blood of old Paugus," thought the hunter, "and I'll give him warning." Following a winding path that led to the mill, he found an old man still at work in the dusk, and hurriedly told him that young Paugus, son of the old chief, was at the tavern. The sun was setting to the south of Moosehillock, when Chamberlain took his gun and powder horn from the prongs of a moose horn where they hung on the wall of the mill. Going to the gate in the millrace, he raised it and set the mill going, leaving his coat hanging on the gate. Then he hid himself in the bushes. Just as it was growing almost too dark to see, he made out a moving form creeping from another clump above the mill. Hearing the noise of the mill, the figure shrank back into the thicket, coming out again a little distance off, to reconnoiter. Starting a third time, something suddenly caught his eye, he stopped short, and with quick aim fired. The report rang sharply on the still air, and Chamberlain could see the Indian creeping out on a log that overhung the race. Rising to his full height, he looked down to make sure of the success of his shot. Then in his mind's eye the old man saw, silhouetted against the red sky of the setting sun, not the young Indian, but the well remembered form of the



*Fitzwilliam Church*





## The Groton, Keene, and Hanover Road

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old Pequawket chief. A second shot, and the young man lurched forward and fell far down into the rushing water below.

On an April day in 1725, on the shore of a pond near Fryeburg, Maine, now known as Lovell Pond, Captain Lovell (or Lovewell) with a number of men from Groton had had a battle with some Indians. Paugus, chief of the Pequawkets, was killed by John Chamberlain, practically in a duel, it is said. According to tradition, Paugus and Chamberlain had both gone to the pond to clean their muskets which had become foul. Chamberlain caught sight of the chief and challenged him. Paugus was priming when Chamberlain struck the breech of his gun on the ground, causing it to prime itself, and immediately fired, killing the old chief instantly as he was aiming—a singularly ungallant act it would seem, which young Paugus had come to avenge, that autumn evening in Groton.

Chamberlain's Mill was on Martin's Pond Brook, at the foot of Brown Loaf, on the Lowell road in Groton, and if you look off from the top of Black Cap or Rattlesnake Mountain, near North Conway, you will see in the distance, beyond Fryeburg, over in Maine, the waters of Lovell Pond gleaming in the distance. Mt. Pequawket near Intervale and Paugus in the Sandwich Range perpetuate the name of the chief and that of his tribe.

Western New Hampshire stages went by the Lunenburg and Fitchburg road. We find early references to the Fitchburg taverns of the seventeenth century, and later the opening of the quarries and the building of the first mills along the Nashua

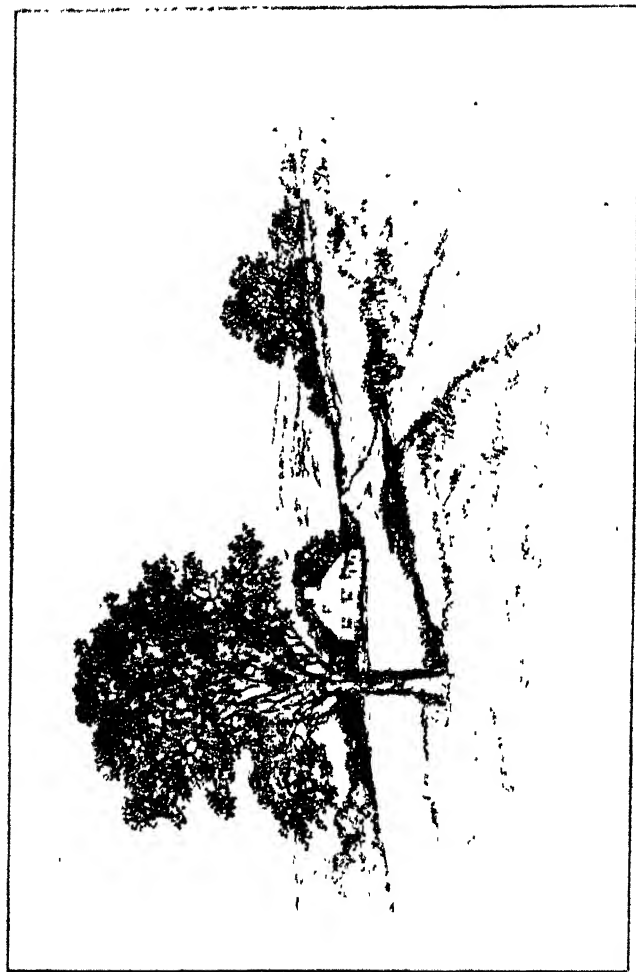
must have brought much business to the taverns and early coaching inns of the town. At the time of Shays' Rebellion several men are said to have hidden from the officers in a little closet under the stairs of the Upton Tavern.

The drivers on these upcountry routes were usually on friendly terms with the farmers and their wives along the way, bringing the news, of course, and messages, letters, and packages besides. An old driver of the near-by town of Ayer told Mrs. Earle that he bought bonnets in Boston for the women along his route; that, above all, he never bought two alike, and that there wasn't another driver on the road that the women would trust for this important service. At one time the Eastern Stage Company had a rule that no driver should carry anything except in his pocket.

On the present main route through Rindge, not far from the branch to New Ipswich, the road tops the ridge and we get our first view of Monadnock; and here, where the impatient motorist seldom stops, is a far outlook over low-lying meadows and farmlands and half-hidden lakes with the Grand Monadnock and its outstretched foothills in the distance.

At Townsend Harbor is an old house built in 1720 by John Conant, and once kept as a tavern, but now privately owned and occupied. Much of the old interior finish still remains.

Before the building of the Fitchburg, Ashburnham, and Winchendon turnpike, the stages went by way of New Ipswich and over the old Jaffrey and Marlborough road to Keene. In those days the Troy stages probably turned off at Perkins Pond



*A New Hampshire Road*



## The Groton, Keene, and Hanover Road

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in Jaffrey, no doubt resting their horses at the top of the rise between Bigelow Hill and Gap Mountain, when some of the passengers perhaps got out to walk up the hill, stopping a few moments at the top to look back at the forest-clad slopes of Monadnock rising from the little green meadow and farm lands at its foot. In those days the mountain pastures were kept clear, and could have been seen dotted with sheep and cattle far up the slopes. Today, traces of the old stone walls are still to be found, deep in the woods high up on the mountain side, "pathetic monuments of vanished men" whose patient toil had cleared the land.

In 1801 a mounted carrier first went over the old Keene and Jaffrey road once a week between Keene and Boston, and in that year Jaffrey had its first post office. Two years later a regular biweekly mail stage began running between Walpole and Boston, the fare being five dollars, and passengers were allowed fourteen pounds of baggage free. As we have seen, it was a two days' journey, the night stop being at New Ipswich. Later a service was established with relays of four-horse teams from Bellows Falls to Boston every other day, the time being thirteen hours. This was the first stage of the journey on the most direct route to central Vermont and Montreal. The service was continued until the building of the Cheshire Railroad in 1847. Mr. Allen Chamberlain says in his "Annals of the Grand Monadnock": "Even before the first stage line came into operation the pike became a popular freight artery, especially during the season of good sledding. In winter the toll was half the summer

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

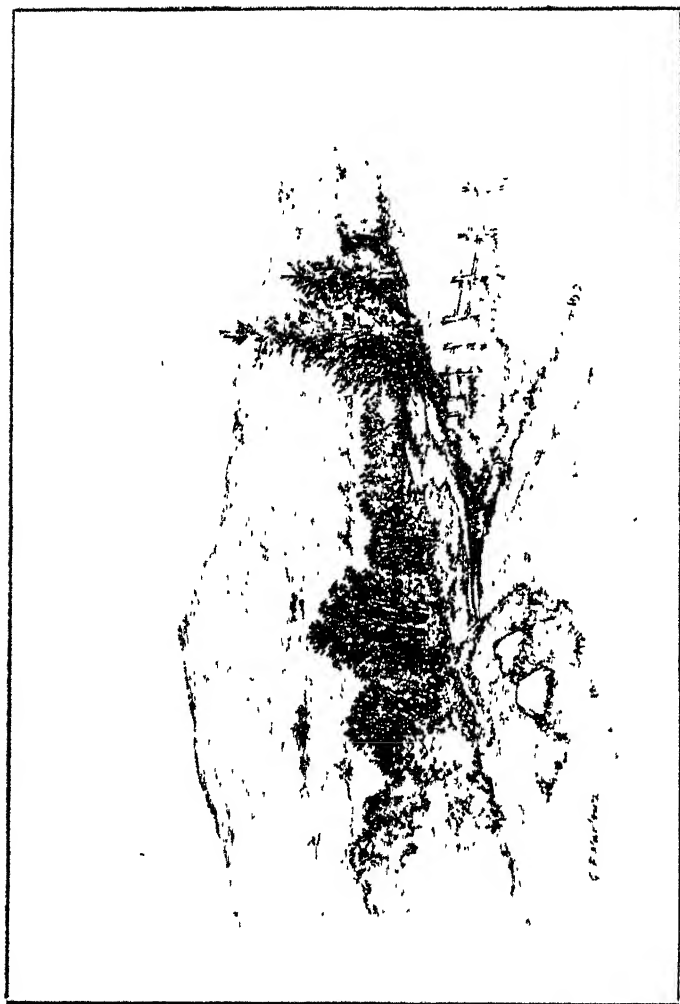
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rate. The farmers and traders all the way from Vermont down used this route in carrying their pork, poultry, butter, cheese, grain, wool, hides and cider to the down-country markets. For return cargoes they picked up consignments of such merchandise as iron and other hardware, cotton cloth and finer textiles, and groceries, which included New England rum. From twenty to forty sleds in company was no uncommon sight, it is said." An old man who remembered those days said, "Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth was never a circumstance to the caravans that passed along our turnpike in those stirring days."

The coaches used the village taverns as their posting stations, but the freight wagons generally put up at some of the private houses along the way. These also were the stopping places for the drovers who passed through in spring and autumn with their herds of sheep and cattle. In winter sleds were used.

This way Thoreau and other early visitors to the mountain must have come, for Thoreau's first visit was in 1843, four years before the railroad was opened.

Jaffrey is one of the remaining unspoiled New England villages. It has not even a gas station, its inhabitants still preferring to travel the mile to East Jaffrey. Many of its old-fashioned white houses around the hilltop common and along its village street have long been the homes of a few Boston families who for several generations have spent their summers here. Beyond their white fences and tall lilac bushes and from the side roads and narrow lanes behind, we catch glimpses of pleasant gardens and well trimmed lawns, and along the winding roads that



*Monadnock*





## The Groton, Keene, and Hanover Road

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lead back among the hills from the village are old red or white farmhouses with their weather-beaten barns and outbuildings, with far views from high pastures and hilltop orchards towards Monadnock or the Temple Hills.

The history of many of these old farms goes back to the days of the earliest settlers in this region, about the time of the Revolution. One of the oldest houses in Jaffrey is the little white cottage just south of the Shattuck Inn. This house, perhaps the second on the site, was built about 1784 by John Buckley or Buchler, an escaped Hessian soldier. Buckley was a cabinet-maker, and is said to have built the panel work in the old meetinghouse, now the town hall. The farm of John Cutter, on which stands the Ark, was in the possession of the family for more than a hundred and fifty years. The Ark, originally their farmhouse, probably was built in 1808. It was large for a farmhouse then, and soon began to be called "Cutter's Ark"; and so it has been ever since.

Whether seen from the Jaffrey or the Dublin highway, or across the quiet waters of Thorndike Pond, its summit and long northerly ridge rising above the forest on the opposite shore, or farther away as we first sight it on the road from Boston, rising above the lower hills, in the northwest, Monadnock is ever one of the most satisfying of New England mountains. Unlike so many of our prominent summits, it is unmarred by any objectionable tower or other structure, the stone cabin for the warden being so placed as to be inconspicuous.

By the foresight, public spirit, and generosity of various

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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groups of people, residents and lovers of the region, a good part of the mountain and adjoining area is now included in the public reservations. Much of the land on the Dublin side and elsewhere not at present so held is in the hands of summer residents of long standing or is included in the hotel properties.

About 1820 the old Jaffrey route between Monadnock and Gap Mountain was given up and the stages went through Fitzwilliam. Here the old tavern facing the common is still receiving guests. The house was built about 1810, when the opening of the turnpike began to divert traffic from the inns of the Jaffrey road. The church, built in 1817, is an exceptionally good example of early nineteenth century work.

Most of the settlers in this region were farmers or sons of farmers from Worcester and Middlesex counties. Many of those who came after the Revolution are said to have been in the army. At that time the roads leading to Jaffrey and towns in the vicinity were little better than the old farm and wood roads of today, to be traveled only on foot or on horseback, or in winter with ox sleds. Only with the road building of the early years of the nineteenth century did they begin to approach the condition of even our poorer unsurfaced gravel roads of today.

Keene, with its famous wide, elm-shaded main street, proclaimed by some of our not overmodest publicity agents "the widest paved street in the world," still maintains its reputation as an unusually agreeable town, though the push of modern progress has robbed it of much of its pleasant old-time flavor. It has a number of rather fine old houses, however, and at least



*Grafton, from the Hill*



## The Groton, Keene, and Hanover Road

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one which was once a tavern among the many which must have lined its main street and done a thriving business in the days of the stages. "The excellent Inn of Capt. Wyman in Keene" was built by Colonel Isaac Wyman in 1762, and here, in the northeast room on the 22nd day of October, 1770, the trustees of Dartmouth College met to organize the new college at Hanover.

Craft's Tavern in the little town of Walpole was kept by Major Asa Bullard. Here in the last years of the eighteenth century, the Walpole Literary Club met—a sort of forerunner, apparently, of the Concord School of Philosophy of half a century later. The leader was Joseph Dennie, editor of the *New Hampshire Journal and Farmer's Museum*, and in Craft's Tavern he wrote his "Lay Sermons," said, in a day when sermons seem to have afforded much of the popular reading of our grandparents, to have been read from Maine to Georgia. Here came Royall Tyler, who wrote a book called *The Algerine Captive*, an early thriller and best seller. Tyler became Chief Justice of Vermont. Another contributor was David Everett, who wrote that one-time favorite for school declamation days,

You'd scarce expect one of my age  
To speak in public on the stage.

Twelve miles from Bellows Falls, on the Windham road, is the little village of Grafton, where, at the old white tavern on the village street, still well patronized by summer visitors,

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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coaches for Manchester and towns to the north used to change horses.

From Walpole to Hanover the stage followed the old road along the Connecticut. To Dartmouth College at Hanover, in September, 1772, came nine boys from Canadian settlements near Quebec, among them a grandson, then about eight years old, of one of the Tarbells "captivated" at Groton. There were to have been ten, but one was taken sick with the measles, "and thereby his coming was prevented." We are told, however, that he arrived later.

The Reverend Eleazar Wheelock, who afterwards became president of Dartmouth, had conducted a school for Indians at Hanover. Among his pupils was Brant, the Indian who later rescued Lieutenant Jonathan Maynard when he had been captured by the Indians near Crown Point and condemned to be burnt. Brant afterwards served as secretary to Guy Johnson, a prominent loyalist, and traveled with him to England, where, it is thought, he may have been presented to the King. There is said to have been a portrait of him at Warwick Castle.

Beyond Hanover, Montreal stages went through Montpelier to Burlington on Lake Champlain and so by St. Albans and St. Johns.



Sgt. W.  
Grafton 1/12  
19 26 27

*Grafton Village*





## VII

### *The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road*

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"The coach! Gude guide us, gentlemen, is it no on the stand yet? Is it the coach ye hae been waiting for?"

SCOTT, *The Antiquary*

IF ANY of our ancestors of the time just before the Revolution had occasion to make the journey from Boston to Newburyport or Portsmouth, they probably were glad to avail themselves of Mr. Stavers' "Large Stage Chair" which "performed" once a week (except in bad weather), leaving Charles Street ferry on the Thursday and arriving at the sign of the Earl of Halifax in Portsmouth the next day; having spent the night at Ipswich. Lest anyone should be in doubt as to the nature of this strange vehicle, it may be said that it was drawn by two horses "well equipped" and was contrived to carry four persons besides the driver, and that in the event of only two persons occupying it they would be "accommodated to carry things of bulk and value to make a third or fourth person": a feat of legerdemain which the advertisement does not explain. For this they paid thirteen shillings and sixpence to Portsmouth and "at the same rate of conveyance back again"; and "those who would not be disappointed" were advised to enter their names at

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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Mr. Stavers' on Saturdays before nine in the evening, paying half of the fare, the remainder to be paid at the end of the journey.

Mr. Stavers' venture was so successful that two years later "The Portsmouth Flying Stage-Coach" was put on, with four or six horses and carrying six "insides."

These coaches ran over the old road through Salem and Ipswich, and in winter it must have been a cold and dreary journey over the Lynn marshes, through piled-up drifts swept by the winds and storms of the North Atlantic, but little broken by the outlying promontory of Nahant. It was not until 1804, more than forty years later, that the Newburyport Turnpike was opened.

Although a matter of four miles from our route, we should turn aside on the road to Saugus before we enter Lynn, and visit the Boardman house on Howard Street, on the way to Melrose: one of the best examples of seventeenth century houses in New England, and now the property of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. The house was built in 1657 for some Scotch prisoners taken at the Battle of Dunbar, when the Merry Monarch's followers were so ingloriously put to rout by Oliver's army. Some of these men were brought to New England to work in the ironworks at "Lin."

And at Lynn, halfway between Boston and Salem, was the Anchor, kept by Joseph Armitage and much patronized by those having business at the court at Salem. Here Governor John Endicott once had a modest bill of 3s. 8d. for "beare &

## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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cacks to himself and some other gentlemen," including two single items of 6d. for beare & a cack, presumably for himself. Would that some of our present-day officials were equally considerate of their taxpayers!

Thomas Marshall succeeded Armitage at the Anchor, arriving from London in 1635. He went back to England for a time to fight in Cromwell's army, returning with the title of Captain before his name, and tales of his military achievements which apparently lost nothing in the telling. John Dunton stopped at the inn in 1686, and wrote that Captain Marshall was "a hearty old gentleman, formerly one of Oliver's soldiers, upon which he very much values himself. He had all the history of the civil war at his fingers' end, and if we may believe him Oliver did hardly anything that was considerable without his assistance, and if I'd staid as long as he'd have talked, he'd have spoiled my ramble at Salem."

Salem having always been a county seat, much business must have come to the inns and taverns in the time of the sitting of the courts. Doubtless the judges and more prominent members of the bar patronized the most fashionable and genteel of the inns and were served by the landlord himself and his upper servants in the privacy of the best parlor, while the less fortunate counsel, clerks, and jury went to the ordinary. I dare say on the opening of court there was a procession led by the sheriffs in laced cocked hats, the judges in wigs and scarlet gowns—an alluring spectacle for hangers-on about the tavern doors, and others of the populace, for these were the days when color

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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and dignity of garb had not been entirely banished from our now too democratic courts of law.

Probably these old innkeepers were as alive to the profits of the convention business as are the managers of a Statler or a Parker House today. At the ordination of the Reverend Joseph McKean at near-by Beverly in 1785, we find the following items on the tavern keeper's bill:

30 Bowles of Punch before the People went to meeting	3
10 bottles of wine before they went to meeting	1 10
44 bowles of punch while at dinner	4 8
18 bottles of wine	2 14
8 bowles of Brandy	1 2
Cherry Rum	1 10
6 people drank tea	9d

This was a hardy age, and even the stiffest of whisky-and-sodas or like modern weak inventions would have seemed but poor stuff to the frequenters of these ordination ceremonies. Probably one of the shortest cuts to intoxication, however, was by way of a mixture of "syder" and rum, which bore the ominous name of stone-wall. Possibly this had been served on that evening when Judge Sewall says Mr. Shrimpton and others "came in a coach from Roxbury about nine o'clock, or past, singing as they came." A drink known as whistle-belly-vengeance is said to have been particularly popular in Salem. To make this, sour beer was simmered in a kettle, sweetened with molasses, filled with brown-bread crumbs, and drunk piping-hot.

## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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When John Hancock came to Salem as chairman of the "Provincial Congress" which met when Gage refused to convene the General Court there, perhaps it was by the famous "chariot" inherited from his father: that coach which was built in London and had involved so many years of correspondence with Mr. Christopher Kilby, and which must have a step uncommonly low because "Mrs. Hancock . . . is a little weak in the knees." It must be high, for the same lady "is none of the shortest and smallest of folks," though he would prefer one "as light as possible to her size." The doors of this wonderful vehicle had double slides for glass or canvas, and the lining was to be either a light-colored or a scarlet cloth, "which ever is most fashionable," and on the doors were painted the Hancock and Henchman coats of arms. His friend Sir Harry Frankland was to be consulted about it all, and the harnesses were to be like his, with bells for winter, when the coach went on runners.

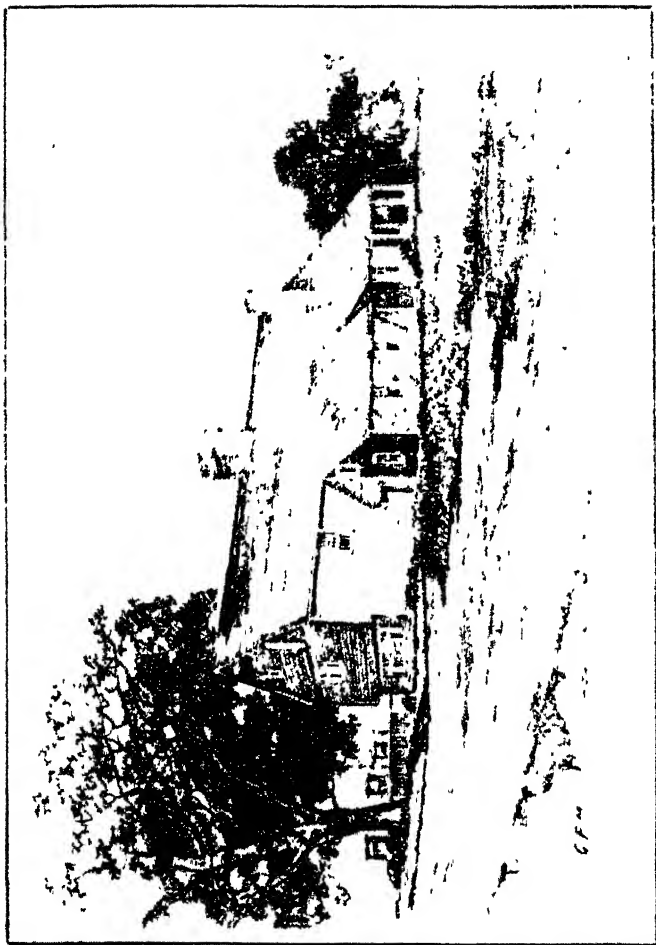
Though Salem must ever rank among the foremost of our historic towns, I cannot help feeling that it has never quite recovered all of its old air of staid gentility since the disastrous fire of 1914, though fortunately most of its fine old houses and historic buildings escaped destruction. But today many of the old Washington Square mansions are shut up or given over to apartments or boarding houses, and whatever may be Salem's commercial prosperity, an air of sadness and depression seems to have settled over many of its old streets, once lined with the houses of so many of New England's merchant princes, houses redolent with the fragrance of all the spices and perfumes of the

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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East—of India and China and the islands of the Pacific—and filled with the choicest treasures from the cargoes of their owners' clipper ships. And in the East India Marine Museum in Essex Street we shall find intriguing models of many of these old ships and other craft, and many of the rare treasures which came to Salem safely stowed away in the holds of some of the ships themselves. And farther down the street, at the Essex Institute, are rooms furnished with the priceless furniture and pictures and other treasures from the houses of their one-time owners. And here on the left is the gambrel-roof house where Hawthorne was born, and on Turner Street, near the harbor, is the House of the Seven Gables itself; with all or most of them still plain to be seen, and its little many-paned bay window projecting onto the sidewalk. Within, its old rooms are charmingly arranged with furnishings of the period, and there are portraits and many other mementos of the Hawthorne family. In the garden behind is another fine old house of Salem's earliest days, once known as the Old Bakery. Threatened with destruction, it was moved from its original site in another part of the town and is now carefully restored. And not far away, on Derby Street, is the old Custom House, where Nathaniel Hawthorne toiled as a clerk day by day, his mind all the while full of the romances of the future years. These are but a few of the attractions of Salem; but they are all digressions, and we must be on our way.

At Ipswich, one Corporal John Andrews kept the White Horse in High Street, or did until 1658, when he was refused



*The Old Whipple House, Ipswich*





## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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the renewal of his license for serving after closing hours. Whereupon Deacon Moses Pengry was granted the license, and kept the ordinary in his place. There may have been other reasons for the Corporal's removal, for in the court record of April 28 is an entry referring to his having appeared in court "upon a vehement suspicion" of his having pulled down the Deacon's sign and also "Mr. Brown his gate and dore and Lieut. Sam Appleton his gate," the last two having been signers of the petition for recalling the Corporal's license.

Ipswich not so many years ago was a quiet, pleasant old town, and to a great extent is still, with many old houses—above all, the Whipple house.

John Whipple kept an early "package store," having been licensed to sell not less than a quart at a time, none to be drunk on the premises, and "not to sell by retail to any but men of family and of good repute nor sell any after sun sett." For more than thirty years the Whipple house has been occupied by the Ipswich Historical Society, and it is one of the best examples of a seventeenth century house in New England. Another landlord, Jonathan Wade, seems to have kept within the law as a tavern keeper only to fall into the hands of the court officers for selling grindstones "and other things" at "expensive prices"; nor could this have been his first offense, for before that he had been fined five pounds for "afronting the court."

John Adams waxed somewhat sarcastic about the keeper of one of the Ipswich taverns and his wife, declaring the landlord of Treadwell's "as proud, as conceited, as any nobleman in

England," and his wife, a great-granddaughter of Governor Endicott, to have "all the notions of high family that you find in the Winslows, Hutchinsons, Quincys, Saltonstalls, Leonards, Otises." Which sounds a little as though Mr. Adams had been snubbed at Treadwell's, or at any rate had not received the show of respect he had expected.

John Dunton, the London bookseller whose wife was a sister-in-law of Defoe and sister of John Wesley's mother, and who figures in the "Dunciad" of Pope, was better pleased with Ipswich hospitality. Coming to the colonies in 1685, he says of Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, at whose house he stayed, "the extraordinary civility and respect they showed me, gave me reason enough to think I was very welcome. . . . My apartment was so noble and the furniture so suitable to it, that I doubt not that even the King himself has oftentimes been contented with a worse lodging. . . . Having reposed myself all night upon a bed of down, I slept so very soundly that . . . the Sun had got the start of me." This is now known as the Caleb Lord house.

Washington's tavern at Ipswich was the Swasey house, built in 1693, and then kept by Mrs. Homans. It still stands, but so altered that the original could scarcely be recognized. The old Ross Tavern may still be found in one of the busy streets of the town.

At the old village of Rowley some four miles beyond Ipswich we shall pass the general store kept for nearly two hundred and fifty years by members of the Prime family. The store was opened in 1707, sixty-eight years after the Reverend Ezekiel

## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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Rogers and his little band settled in Rowley. For thirty years, when the late John Prime was town clerk, the town records were kept in the store safe. For a long time "Old Nancy," a ship cannon used in the War of 1812, was stored in the cellar. Sad to say, not long ago the old store, reputed to be the oldest general store in the country, was closed for lack of business, having succumbed to the superior attractions of chain stores in near-by Ipswich and Newburyport.

Another three miles and we are on High Street in Newbury, the Old Bay Road, crossing the Parker River by the Old Town Bridge. Half a mile before reaching Newbury green we should turn to the right down Little's Lane, grass-grown on either side and overhung with two rows of fine old trees—a typical English countryside. Not far down, on the left, is the Spencer-Pierce or Little house, of a type unique in America: a true little English farmhouse. The vine-clad brick porch with arched doorway has an arched panel in the brickwork between the windows of the room above. Unfortunately the clapboarded addition of recent years has covered up the old picturesque stone and stucco south gable with its great stone chimney. Gone also is the old stable once facing the road, with its quaint arched passage to the farmyard, reminiscent of old English inns and farm buildings. At the bottom of the lane a farm gate leads to a pasture with a herd of grazing cattle, and we look across green fields to the blue water of Newburyport harbor at the mouth of the Merrimac.

Returning to Newbury High Street not far from the green

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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with its duck pond, we pass the old Short house on the way, and the Tristram Coffin house is just beyond on our left: a picturesque seventeenth century house in a charming setting surrounded by old trees. Now in the possession of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, this house was owned and occupied by many generations of the Coffin family.

Tristram Coffyn, as the name originally was spelled, was born in Plymouth in English Devonshire. A follower of King Charles, he left England in the first year of the Rebellion, at the age of thirty-three, and came to New England with Dionis, his wife, and five young children, also bringing his mother and two sisters. He opened an ordinary on the Merrimack and kept the ferry, for which he received "two pence a person out, and two pence Back and four pence a beast, and he shall have it as long as the town shall see cause."

This first Tristram Coffyn presently left Newbury for Nantucket, where he became the ancestor of the Nantucket Coffins. His son, Tristram, Jr., married the widow of another tavern keeper, however, and with her took over the license and the house: a favorite and not uncommon way, about that time, of entering upon a going business. This is the house which stands on the Old Bay Road today, a rare treasure among the few old inns that remain to us.

Tristram Coffin, Jr., died in 1704. His wife survived him less than two years, "having lived to see 177 of her children and children's children to the third generation." On the death of

## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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Tristram, Jr., his son and a grandson, Joshua, with their families occupied the house. It was Joshua who wrote his father: "I don't ask you to give me house or land at present, although I don't think in that case I should be unreasonable (considering my family Increases so fast), but at present I only ask Leave to build a Bedroom chimney on my own cost for our present comfort. Which when you have properly weighed the affair & Considered what you have done for Bro. David and Paul, not to mention Boyd, for their convenience, & my present need of what I ask, I Can't suppose you will single me out from the rest of your children as an object of your Displeasure." A fair proposition, it would seem, and we hope he got the chimney. At any rate there are two outside chimneys on the house.

For nearly three hundred years the house remained in the possession of the family, and for most of the time it was occupied by them. Throughout their many generations they had served their town and country in various useful capacities, as selectmen, town clerks, and officers of militia. There was a schoolmaster, a doctor, a clergyman, a justice of the county court, an historian of Newbury.

Thus did the Royalist tavern keeper who came to settle among the Newbury Puritans leave his mark upon this New England community.

In 1929 in accordance with a family agreement, the house and the land on which it stands were conveyed to the Preservation Society as a family memorial. The house is furnished throughout with fine old furniture, and there are portraits and other

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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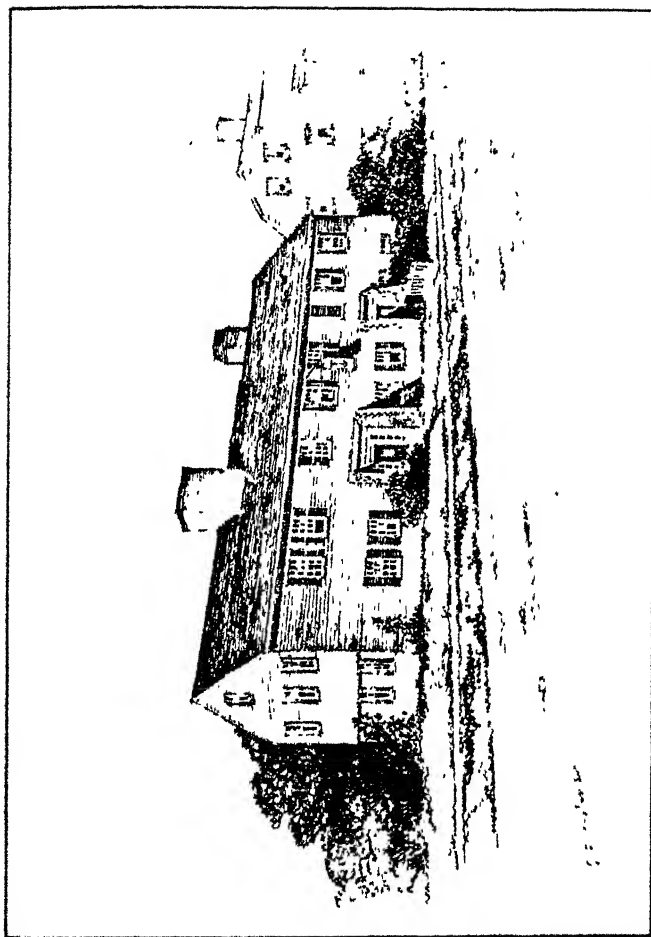
pictures of interest. From the sloping lawn and garden behind, there is a charming outlook up the wooded hillside.

"Who will lay out such an estate to be at the mercy of the next new selectman . . . whether he shall hold it above one year or no?"

How many times, in the two hundred and fifty years and more that have passed, has an honest citizen had occasion to echo the lament of Hugh March, who in 1682 complained, "The ordinary that I bought, tho old and out of repayer, cost me 120 lb besides the valeu of more than 440 lb I layd out in building barn, stable and housing, with bedding &c . . ."

March had been ousted from the proprietorship of the Blue Anchor, which stood in the High Street in Newbury, and we are thankful to say, stands there still, a little beyond the Coffin house, towards Newburyport. It was all because soon after he had bought the tavern of Stephen Swett, his wife had died, and he had married the daughter of Daniel Bowman of Connecticut, who, quite unknown to him, already had a husband in Virginia!

And in the Blue Anchor at last we have a tavern that really looks its past—such an inn as might have been found in the old days in the streets of a Devon seaport town, Bideford or Westward Ho, where after a successful cargo had been run and the kegs were all safely stowed, there would be a gathering in the snug bar, with tales of the exploit and plenty of jokes at the expense of the excise men who had had one more night's hard work for nothing. Here at the Blue Anchor, around the great fireplace in the bar parlor, must have gathered many a group



*The Blue Anchor, Newbury*





## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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of early inhabitants of Newbury to listen to the talk of some returned soldier home from the French and Indian Wars, or sailor back from a long voyage, with tales of storm and shipwreck and encounters with Barbary pirates or English privateers. Here, the villagers and local patriots gathered about the taproom fire on winter nights, when over the tankards of ale and flip many a joke was cracked and many a song was sung; when the one with the best voice led off with "Why Should We Our Lot Repine?" or "The Parson and the Barrel of Beer" and other tuneful favorites, and the rest joined in the chorus.

The old house is a long, low, white clapboarded structure, with an overhang at one end and one large chimney and another not so large, which replaces an older one; and it still squats by the roadside with an air of fitting into the past as a part of the old seaport town. Within is much old pine paneling, and there are heavy chamfered summer-beams and a fireplace more than ten feet wide, and although it is long since foaming tankards or glasses of best Jamaica passed over the bar, we may get a most appetizing meal here, or the less substantial tea and "cacks" at the proper hour of the afternoon; grateful to the members of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, who more than twenty-five years ago made this old house their first purchase.

Most famous perhaps of the inns on the Boston and Portsmouth road was the Wolfe Tavern at Newburyport which stood at the corner of Threadneedle Alley and Fish Street. What a pity it is that so many of the old names have given

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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place to commonplace ones! Threadneedle Alley is now Harris Street and Fish Street State Street, where the Wolfe's successor stands today.

William Davenport, a carver, bought the original old house in 1743, but it was not until 1762, when he had lived in it for nearly twenty years, that he decided to keep a tavern, and made additions to the house and fitted it up as an inn. He had been captain in a regiment at the capture of Quebec, and he hung out his sign with the portrait of his hero, General Wolfe; and here the farmers from the country round gathered about the fire in the bar to discuss politics and the latest news over their mugs of flip and mulled cider. At the time of the Stamp Act the house was a gathering place for enthusiastic opponents. On "Thirsday" the 26th of September, 1765, Messrs. Joseph Stanwood and others, "At the Grate Uneasiness and Tumult on Occasion of the Stamp Act," incurred a bill for £59 17s. 3d. old tenor which included 33 double bowls of punch, 3 "Thrible" bowls, various egg and nip toddies, "Suppers which were cooked Hot," and finally a "Breakfast of Coffee for Sd Company."

It would not be surprising if it was during the consumption of the above that the "Sd Company" got up their courage for the hanging in effigy of the stamp officer which took place near the tavern a few days later.

William Davenport was succeeded by his brother Moses. Among the French notables who visited New England after the Revolution was the Marquis de Chastellux, who in 1782 traveled with the Baron de Talleyrand, M. de Vaudreuil and

176

## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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Lynch de Montesquieu, grandson of the author. De Chastellux wrote: "It was two o'clock when we reached Merimack ferry. . . . After passing the ferry in little flat boats which held only five horses each, we went to Mr. Davenport's Inn where we found a good dinner ready." In the evening they were entertained at the house of Mr. John Tracy, a mile from the town. Mr. Tracy was evidently proud of his garden, and like most owners of gardens today he was not going to let his guest escape without seeing it, for De Chastellux says, though it was already night "I went by moonlight to see the garden." There were compensations though, "for the evening passed rapidly with the ladies by the aid of agreeable conversation and a few glasses of punch. . . . At ten o'clock an excellent supper was served; we drank good wine. Miss Lee sang and prevailed on Messieurs de Vaudreuil and Taleyrand to sing also. Towards midnight the ladies withdrew but we continued drinking Maderia and Xery. Mr. Tracy, according to the custom of the country offered us pipes, which were accepted by Mr. de Taleyrand and M. de Montesquieu, the consequence of which was that they became intoxicated and were led home, where they were happy to get to bed. As to myself, I remained perfectly cool, and continued to converse on trade and politics with Mr. Tracy." Altogether a most agreeable evening, one would say, that speaks well for the hospitality of Newburyport a century and a half ago. We wonder, however, if it was the pipes which caused Messieurs de "Taleyrand" and de Montesquieu to be led home and put to bed?

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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During the time of Prince Stetson, who became landlord in 1807, the old house was burnt in the great Newburyport fire. The tavern was promptly rebuilt, however, and three years later Benjamin Hale hung out the old sign at the corner of State and Harris streets. This is the house we see today: a three-story brick building with a modern porch across its front, and here, until recently, during the summer and autumn season the traveler could still find rest and refreshment, though these days of restricted travel have brought hard times for the landlords, and at present the old house is closed and stands deserted and forlorn, with an air of supreme dejection.

There were several other well known inns in Newburyport during the period after the Revolution. Major Lunt, who had an inn on Federal Street near the corner of Water, was also a stagecoach proprietor. Samuel Richardson, alive to the importance of moving with the times, did business under the sign of the American Eagle. Prince Stetson, one-time landlord of the Wolfe, later took the Washington Hotel in State Street, and he it was who captured the honor of playing host to Lafayette.

John Quincy Adams, who spent some time in Newburyport in his younger days, stopped at Sawyer's on the Bradford road, now in the town of West Newbury. On May 21, 1788, he wrote in his diary: "I walked with Pickman in the evening to Sawyer's, where we drank tea and made it almost ten o'clock before we got home. I then went up with my flute to Stacy's lodging, our general headquarters. About a quarter before twelve, Stacy, Thompson, Putnam with a couple of young lads by the name of

178

## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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Greenough and myself sallied forth upon a scheme of serenading. We paraded round town till about four in the morning."

Mrs. Harriet Prescott Spofford's house near the chain bridge was once a tavern. Its landlord, Ebenezer Pearson, was one of several people accused in a fake highway robbery, when Major Goodridge of Bangor claimed to have been held up and robbed near the tavern on the night of the 19th of December, 1816. Daniel Webster was counsel for the defendant, and made Goodridge so contradict himself on the witness stand that it became evident that the whole thing was a hoax devised by him to cover up his financial difficulties and account for the loss of his personal property.

For harboring the wife, lately arrived from Ireland, of an officer in Gage's army, one tavern keeper found himself in an embarrassing predicament. Landlord Greenleaf seems to have succumbed to the charms of this lady, a Mrs. Bridget Phillips, since "she was a Woman & appeared of Some Fashion." Mrs. Bridget contrived to hire a "Chaise & Boy at Salem & in company with Benjn Jenks" got aboard the *Scarborough* man of war at Portsmouth. However, she left two trunks behind, which she wrote for to be sent to Boston, a request which the Provincial Congress, then meeting at Watertown, were so hardhearted as to refuse.

It was at Newburyport, at a party following the wedding of Joseph Palmer to one of the "celebrated Miss Hunts" of Watertown, that Paul Revere "excelled all his acquaintances in dancing the fashionable hornpipe," according to Miss Esther Forbes.

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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It is thought that his Sara did not accompany him. The wedding had been at Hampton, New Hampshire, the day before, whither the happy couple went in a coach and four, to escape a wedding at home "as they had so many relatives round Boston."

Few Massachusetts towns have so many survivals of the more stately type of domestic architecture of the late eighteenth century as Newburyport, and today these fine old houses, many of them of three stories, with their pilastered and quoined façades and beautifully detailed porches recall the prosperous days of clipper ships when owners and retired captains home from the sea built themselves comfortable homes in this old seaport town. And nowhere in New England, I think, could be found a finer town street than Newburyport's High Street, with its half-mile or more of stately mansions, set well back behind their urn-topped gateways and green lawns.

"The road from Portsmouth to Newbury passes through a barren country," wrote the Marquis de Chastellux in 1782. And very likely he would have said the same thing today and been astounded at the modern highway and its vehicles, and, as he was a person of taste, perhaps rather annoyed by much of what he found along the way.

During his stay in Portsmouth the Marquis had put up at the Bell, then kept by Colonel Brewster, whom the Marquis described as "a very respectable man, and much attached to his country." Afterwards the house was kept by Jacob Tilton, whose son Johnny, from a misguided experiment in his youth, had

180



*A Newburyport Street*





## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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become the town idiot. It seems that he had tried to forestall the Wrights in their early experiments, for, seeing the hens fluttering out of an upper window of his father's barn, he thought he could do the same; so spreading his arms and waving them in imitation of wings he plunged forward and, landing on his head, received an injury from which he never recovered. Like other unfortunates of the kind, he is credited with occasional knowing remarks. Sent with a sack of corn to the mill one day, the miller asked him "what he knew." "Some things I know, and some things I don't know. I know the miller's hogs grow fat, but I don't know whose corn they fat on."

In 1867 the Bell succumbed to fire, seemingly the inevitable fate of most old houses. It had carried a sign made famous by many old inns on both sides of the Atlantic. It would be interesting to know which of them prompted the rhymes quoted by Miss Crawford:

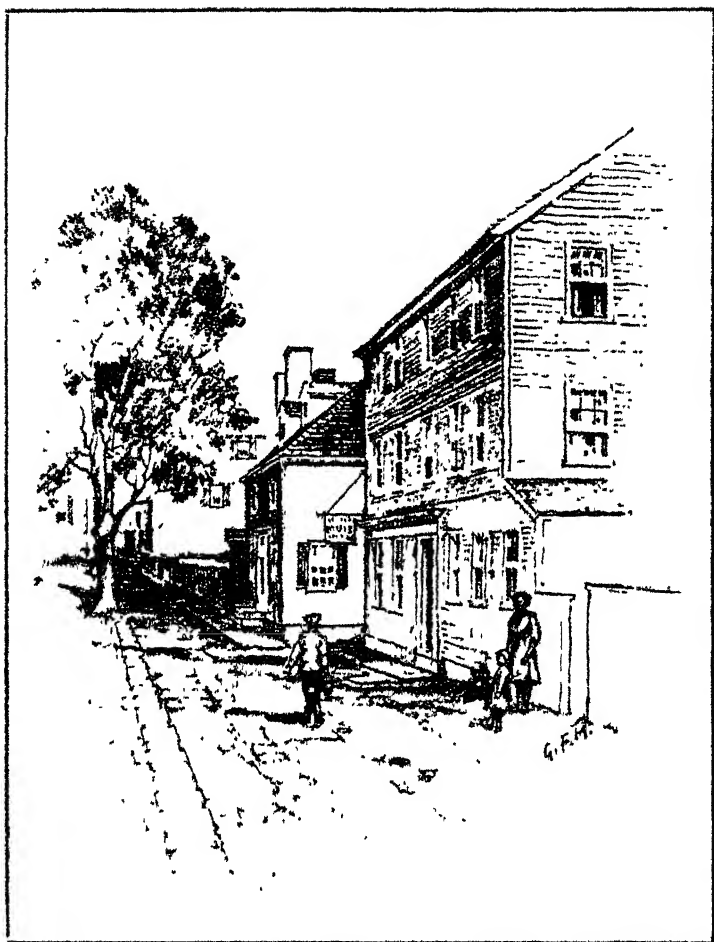
Around the face of blue-ey'd Sue,  
Did auburn ringlets curl,  
Her lips seem'd coral dipp'd in dew  
Her teeth two rows of pearl.  
Joe, of the Bell, whose wine, they said,  
Was new in cask, as he in trade.  
Espous'd this nonpareil;  
"You keep the bar," said Joe, "my dear,  
But be obliging, Sue, d'ye hear,  
And prove to all who love good cheer  
They're welcome to the Bell."

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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A London rider chanc'd to slip  
Behind the bar, to dine,  
And found sweet Susan's yielding lip  
Much mellower than her wine.  
As Joe stepped in, he stamped and tore,  
And for the London beau he swore  
He'd dust his jacket well.  
"Heyday!" says Sue. "What's this, I trow!  
You bade me be obliging, Joe;  
I'm only proving to the beau,  
He's welcome to the Bell!"

A widow of one of the landlords of the Bell kept the boarding house where Paul Jones stayed during the building and equipment of his ship *America*. The house was afterwards known as the Lord house. Benjamin Franklin wrote, "Neither man, nor, so far as I can learn, woman, can for a moment resist the strange magnetism of his presence, the indescribable charm of his manner, . . . and above all the sweetness of his voice and the purity of his language"; and though he must have won the hearts of all the girls of Portsmouth when, at forty-five, he died alone in France, it was the miniature of the Duchess of Chartres on the dial of a watch she had given him which was found clasped in his hand. Paul Jones, who was the son of a Scotch gardener, figures in Sarah Orne Jewett's story "The Tory Lover." The widow Purcell's house, now owned and occupied by the Portsmouth Historical Society, is at the corner of State



*"Mr. Stavers' Inn," The Earl of Halifax, at Portsmouth  
(Later called the Pitt Tavern; from a photograph about 1907)*



## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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and Middle streets, where from June to September it may be entered by all who care to see it.

While the patriots gathered at the Bell, the Tories made merry at the Earl of Halifax, Mr. Stavers' inn, for which we first set out from Boston in his brother Bartholomew's stage chair. Luckily the old house still stands, at the corner of Court and Atkinson streets, though it is no longer a tavern.

It was in the doorway of the Earl of Halifax that Dame Stavers stood, to say, according to Longfellow's poem:

"O Martha Hilton! Fie! how dare you go  
About the town half dressed, and looking so!"

Yet Martha lived to be the wife of Governor Wentworth and mistress of a "Great House looking out to sea."

The Earl of Halifax was much patronized by the Portsmouth Tories, and Stavers at length became so unpopular that a mob gathered in front of the house and somebody began to chop down the signpost from which hung the portrait of the Earl of Halifax. Stavers' negro struck the man with an ax, a blow which left him insane for the rest of his life. Not a pane of glass was left by the mob. Stavers got away on his horse to the house of a Tory in Stratham who had supplied the tavern with ale. The negro, after a long search, was found in the rain-water tank in the cellar, nearly up to his neck in water.

Stavers at length returned to town and was put in jail, but was finally released on the strength of the following extraordinary letter, written by the victim of the ax.

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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Portsmouth, February 3, 1777

To the Committee of Safety the Town of Exeter:

GENTLEMEN:—As I am informed that Mr. Stivers is in confinement in goal upon my account contrary to my desire, for when I was at Mr. Stivers a fast day I had no ill luck nor ment none against the Gentleman but by bad luck or misfortune I have received a bad blow but it is so well that I hope to go out in a day or two. So by this gentlemen of the Committee I hope you will release the gentleman upon my account. I am yours to serve.

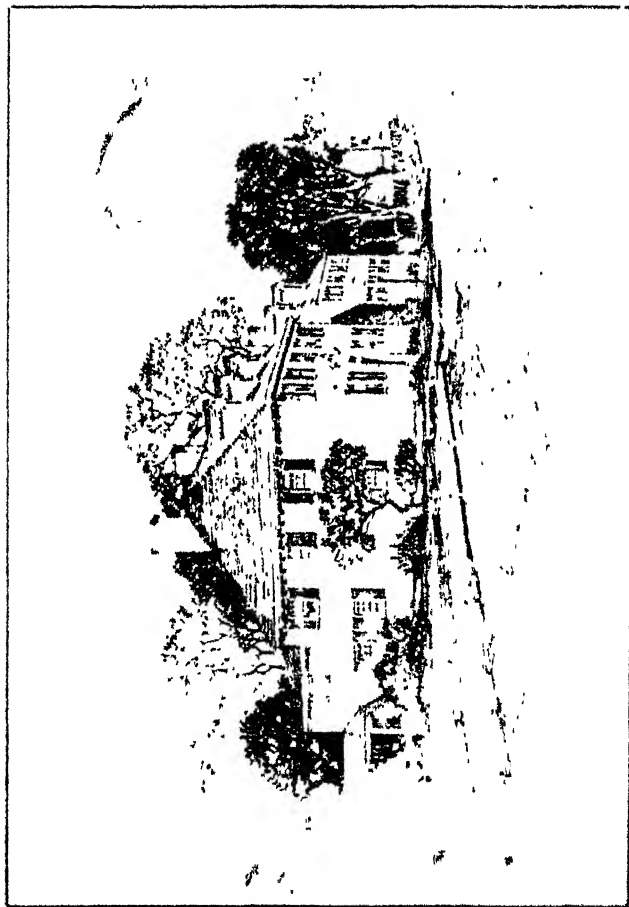
MARK NOBLE

A friend to my country

Whereupon Mr. Stavers wisely renamed the house the Pitt Tavern, after that friend of the colonists, and this minister's portrait on the sign replaced that of the Earl of Halifax.

In 1782 officers of the French fleet put up here, and here Lafayette came to visit them, and Washington of course in 1789. Here John Hancock, Elbridge Gerry, and General Knox were guests, and it is said Louis Philippe and his two brothers failed to be received only from lack of room. The future King went as a guest to the house of Senator Langdon, which fortunately still stands on Pleasant Street, one of the finest of Portsmouth's many fine old houses.

The Deer Tavern, built by John Newmarch, whose wife was a sister of Sir William Pepperell, may still be seen in Deer Street. It is now a private house.



*Jacob Wendell House, Pleasant Street, Portsmouth*





## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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Few towns along the New England coast have so many notable survivals of the domestic architecture of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many of them of much historic interest, as Portsmouth. For a detailed list and description of these we can do no better than refer the reader to the New Hampshire volume of the American Guide Series, prepared by the writers of the erstwhile Federal Writers' Project. Most notable among them perhaps—though among so many it is difficult to single out a few—are the Governor Langdon and Mark Wentworth houses, the Wentworth Gardiner and the Lady Pepperell houses, both overlooking the harbor, the Tobias Leer house and the South Parish Parsonage. The Pepperell house with its delightful garden is now in the possession of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

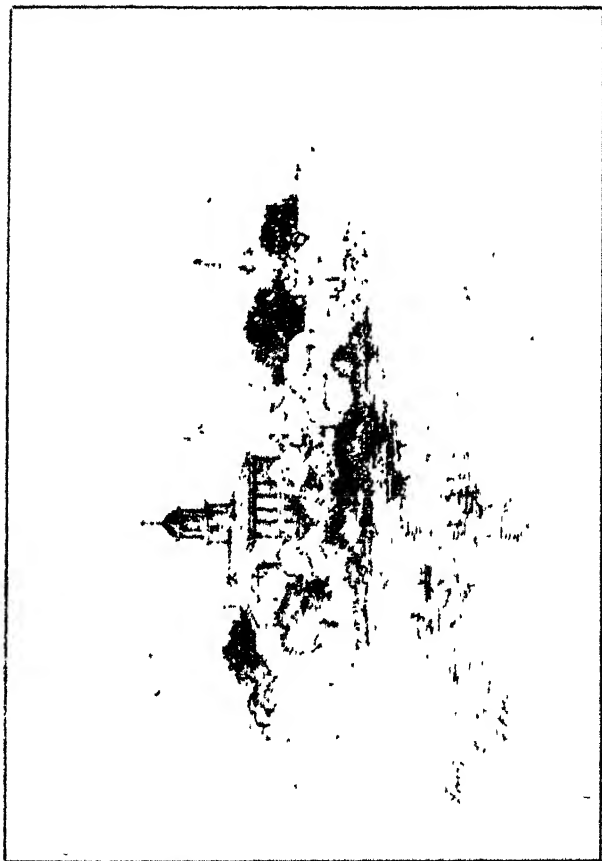
Old St. John's Church, on the hill overlooking the river, is on the site of the original Queen's Chapel which stood for three-quarters of a century, until destroyed by the fire of 1806. The present church was built in the following year. The bell was made of the metal of the old bell taken from a French church at Louisburg by Sir William Pepperell after his capture of the fort. This was cracked in the fire and recast by Paul Revere, but in 1896 it had become so worn that it was again recast.

The custom of the dole, once a common form of charity in England, is still observed at old St. John's. About a hundred and fifty years ago Colonel Theodore Atkinson left a bequest for the distribution of bread for the needy poor of the parish. Twelve loaves were placed on the font and covered with "a fair

linen napkin," but now the legal formality of the bequest is complied with merely by placing a loaf of bread on a table in the vestibule once a month. The sexton brings this, and after the service carries it home and uses it, as for many years the loaf has not been disturbed. The principal of the bequest has long been merged with the general endowment funds of the parish.

The font, of porphyritic marble, is a very curious one. It was brought from Senegal by Colonel John Mason, where it was taken from the French in 1758, and given to the church by Colonel Mason's daughters.

In 1713 Thomas Brattle of Boston had brought an organ from London which he left by will to the old Brattle Street Church, "if they shall accept thereof and within a year after my decease procure a sober person that can play skillfully thereon with a loud noise." Apparently nobody was found who could comply with these terms. Perhaps the musician either did not make a sufficiently loud noise when sober, or when not sober he was not sufficiently skillful. At any rate the "ungodly chest of whistles," as it was called, went to King's Chapel, where it was used until 1756 when it was sold to St. Paul's Church in Newburyport. Here it stayed and was used for eighty years, when it traveled again, this time to Portsmouth, to be used in the chapel of St. John's Church until about 1900. According to the "Annals of King's Chapel" this was "the first organ that ever pealed to the glory of God in this country." The case is not the original one.



*Portsmouth and Old St. John's Church*



## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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The church has one of the four "Vinegar Bibles" in this country, with the misprint "vinegar" for "vineyard" in the title of the parable. This, and the fine silver communion service and alms basin with the royal coat of arms engraved upon them, were given by Queen Caroline.

It is surprising to learn that the traditional date of the coming of the first rector, the Reverend Richard Gibson, first priest of the Church of England in this vicinity, is 1638. He remained for four years—until "deported" by the authorities of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. As the old planter Blackstone said, "the tyranny of the Lord-Bishops had merely been exchanged for that of the Lord-Brethren."

In the old burying ground adjoining the church is the tomb of Governor Benning Wentworth.

With the navy yard and naval hospital across the river at Kittery, Portsmouth today naturally is a particularly busy place.

The Newburyport Turnpike was opened in 1804, and Portland stages left from the Eastern Stage House in Ann Street. This line had a reputation for always being on time. Beyond Portsmouth the road was the main traveled route to eastern New Hampshire towns and Portland, but for the present we shall follow it no farther. At the Pitt Tavern, alias Mr. Stavers' Inn, we arrived at the end of that journey upon which we set out from Boston in his brother Bartholomew's Stage Chair; and although under present-day rates of speed we shall scarcely have required the thirteen hours in which his express coach once covered the ground, if we had lingered at each of the inns

## Coaching Roads of Old New England

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and taverns along the way where the "extraordinary civility and respect" shown us gave us reason enough to think we were "very welcome," perhaps we should not have arrived at all.

It is two hundred and seventy years since Governor Lovelace established the earliest regular post between New York and Boston and that first rider left from the fort at the lower end of Broadway, riding through Roxbury and over the Neck into Boston two weeks afterwards. In time the stage wagon and mail coach succeeded the post-rider, and for a hundred years or more traveled turnpike and post road, only to give way at last to the railroad, perhaps to be replaced in time by the airplane. At one time (1832) there were a hundred and six coach lines running out of Boston. No wonder there were inns and taverns at every village and crossroads. Those were glamorous days—in retrospect, for it must be admitted that some at least of the glamour and romance attributed to the coaching inn has perhaps been due to the novelists, particularly Dickens. Yet Dr. Johnson said of English inns, "There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn," and the Doctor was not apt to bestow praise without reason.

But for more than half a century many of the old coach roads and turnpikes of New England and their roadside taverns were all but deserted.

We hear no more the clanging hoof . . .  
and the old Pike's left to die.

## The Newburyport and Portsmouth Road

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Today many of its old inns that escaped destruction in those later years of the iconoclastic nineteenth century have taken on new life of a kind far beyond the wildest dreams of their landlords of the coaching days.





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